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**STRATFORD-ON-AVON**





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# STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

“ONE thing more,” wrote Sir William Dugdale in 1657, at the close of the eighteen folio pages of his “Antiquities of Warwickshire” devoted to Stratford-upon-Avon, “one thing more in reference to this ancient town is observable, that it gave birth and sepulture to our late famous poet, Will Shakespeare.” There is little need to add the comment that the “one thing more” about Stratford, deemed by the learned antiquary adequately noticed in these five-and-twenty words, has grown into the only thing about it that most men now regard as memorable. Nor would the modern pilgrim—that is, he who makes his pilgrimage with fitting judgment—readily admit that Dugdale has indicated the highest points of interest about Shakespeare’s connection with Stratford. That the borough was his birthplace and burial-place gives it, after all, a smaller attraction than that he lived there for full two-thirds of his life. And completely as the resources of civilization have remodelled the town in many of its aspects, it still boasts sufficient survivals of the age of Elizabeth to give the sojourner a far-off glimpse of Shakespeare’s daily environment. The nineteenth-century manufacturer has not set his mark upon it: the inhabitants know little of life at high pressure. Their acknowledged affinity with the hero who makes their life worth living in more than a single sense, would seem to have held them aloof from all the ruder currents of modern life. It is only within the last half century that the town has begun to extend its boundaries, and the extension has not yet attained very gigantic measurements. The chief streets, with their offshoots, although they have grown wider in many places and in all cleaner, still bear the names by which Shakespeare knew them. The church on the river bank has undergone little change, and time has dealt very kindly with the exterior of the ancient Chapel of the Guild, with the Guildhall, and with the Grammar School, all of which were once overlooked by the windows of Shakespeare’s celebrated house, at the meeting of Chapel Street with Chapel Lane. Although that house has gone, the public garden christened New Place occupies the exact site of the “great garden” that surrounded it when the poet was its owner. Cross-timbered houses, with the carved front in one instance at least merely mellowed by the lapse of years, very often break the monotony of unlovely stretches of modern brickwork. The stone bridge across the Avon is in all its essentials the same as when the Elizabethans crossed it. The water-mill, although in almost all points shaped anew, continues to do the noisy work in which it has persevered through nine centuries. And when once the town is deserted for Shakespeare’s playing fields in the neighbouring country, the changes grow less marked. Stratford always stood upon a “plain ground,” as Leland described it early in the sixteenth century, surrounded by “the champain,” that is, the flat open country. The woodland may have grown scantier, but there is still no lack of it on the low hills of the district, and here and there on the banks of the river. The Forest of Arden, which was in its decadence in Elizabethan England, has now retreated into a mere name, but it was always in

historic times cut off from Stratford by a wide-enough tract of land to prevent it from affecting materially the immediate scenery. The Avon itself winds as of old from Naseby to the Severn, with Stratford on its right bank, midway between its source and mouth, and at a little distance from Stratford it still flows under bridges at Binton and Bidford which are as authentic relics of the sixteenth century as their fellow at Stratford. Numberless villages, like Shottery and Snitterfield, pursue the drowsy rural life that seems always able to resist time's ravages. They have not grown: some of them have been renovated by the modern builder; in a very few cases they have fallen into decay and all but disappeared. But *la fin du vieux temps* has as yet overtaken none of them; and the preservation of an occasional relic like the maypole on the village green at Welford suggests to the least thoughtful passer-by their near relationship with the past. Saunter where we will by the homesteads and meadows of South Warwickshire, we are still led from time to time within view of scenes which may well have inspired poetic passages like Perdita's invitation to the sheep-shearing feast, or the song of Spring in "Love's Labour's Lost."

But there is some danger, although the practice is an attractive one, in making Shakespeare's name the central feature of all Stratford history and topography. It has been done too often already. The writers of guide-books or monographs on the town and district have always endeavoured to fix the attention of the pilgrim or student exclusively on points of Shakespearean interest, and have valued only as much of their investigations as belongs to Shakespearean lore. The scraps of information that their labours have yielded are of their kind beyond price; but they fail to enable the reader to form from them a coherent conception of the town's general development or social growth. With all respect to the antiquaries of Stratford, it may be said that they have overlooked facts in the various stages of the history of the borough which are of striking importance in the municipal history of the country. Nor is this the limit of their offence, if offence can justly be used in such a context. Although it would be only by an awkward distortion of the neglected facts that they could be turned to account in Shakespeare's biography, those of them that relate to the middle ages undoubtedly offer us traditions which influenced the life and thought of the poet as a Stratford townsman of greater receptivity than his neighbours; while those that concern the late years of the sixteenth century, or the early years of the seventeenth, can be made to create for us a picture of the society in which he actually moved. Thus we may be brought to the conclusion that something of Dugdale's method of dealing with Stratford is not without its advantages for the Shakespearean student. It is possible that an account of the town that shall treat it as a municipality not unworthy of study for its own sake, and shall place Shakespeare among its Elizabethan inhabitants as the son of the unlucky woolstapler of Henley Street or as the prosperous owner of New Place, will be richer in suggestiveness, besides being more in harmony with the perspective of history, than a mere panegyric on the parochial relics as souvenirs of the poet's birthplace, home, or sepulchre. The following pages are intended as an experiment in the former direction.

## I.

THE ORIGIN OF THE TOWN, AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE  
SEE OF WORCESTER.

THERE are many towns in England that can claim greater antiquity than Stratford-upon-Avon.\* The county of Warwickshire, called by Drayton the heart of England, was doubtless in prehistoric ages part of the vast forest which covered all the midlands, and which survived in later times in the chain of wood stretching, with occasional clearings, from Byrne Wood in Buckinghamshire, through Abingdon and Wych Woods in Oxfordshire, to the forests of Dean, Arden, Cannock, and Sherwood, and the Derbyshire Wolds. The discovery of a very few tumuli in the district, containing some rude stone implements, mark the presence of a very sparse population in a neolithic age. Place names like Avon, the Celtic word for river, which as *Afon* is still good Welsh, or like Arden, formed from the Celtic *ard*, high or great, and *den*, the wooded valley—a compound which supplied Luxemburg with its district of the Ardennes—prove the sojourn of Celtic tribes in the north and south of Warwickshire before the Roman occupation. We know nothing of the origin of the title *Cornavii*, bestowed by the Romans on the inhabitants of the county, and find few traces of Roman civilization in the district. But their ubiquitous roadmakers did not leave the neighbourhood untouched. Ryknield Street, which ran from Tynemouth in Northumberland, through York, Derby, and Birmingham, to St. David's, skirted the Forest of Arden on its west side, passed through Studley and Alcester, and left the county five miles below Stratford by way of Bidford. The name of *Straetford* is a proof, too, that this was not the only "street" which approached the site of Stratford. It must have started into being like five other villages in different parts of England similarly named, as the approach of a Roman *street* to a *ford*—as the approach of the smaller Roman road that ran from Birmingham through Henley-in-Arden to London to a ford across the Avon. But whether it had become an inhabited place, or had its name before the Romans left Britain, is mere matter of conjecture. Of the Teutonic settlers, a Saxon tribe, known to history as the Hwiccas, occupied Warwickshire and its neighbourhood in the sixth century; but according to local legends, the Celts did not make way for them without a struggle, which was waged very fiercely up the Welcombe Hills that overlook Stratford. For some years the Hwiccas lived in independence under their own alderman; but in the seventh century they were absorbed within the great Marchland—the middle kingdom of Mercia—and their aldermen declined into mere agents of the Mercian kings. The See of Worcester was formed about 679, and all the district of the Hwiccas constituted the bishop's diocese.

\* I have to thank my friend, Mr. A. H. Bullen, for very kindly reading through these pages, while they were passing through the press. My main authorities for the history of mediæval Stratford are Dugdale's account of the town in his History of Warwickshire; Kemble's Codex Diplomaticus; the Domesday Survey; the Customary of the Worcestershire Priory, published by the Camden Society; the Hundred Rolls; the Documentary History of English Guilds, by Toulmin Smith, published by the Early English Text Society; and Mr. J. C. Jeaffreson's Report on the Muniments of Stratford, published by the Historical MSS. Commission. I have also found of service the survey of Stratford made by the Bishop of Worcester in 1251, which was privately printed at Middlehill by Sir Thomas Phillipps; Mr. Seebohm's invaluable book on the Village Community in England; Thomas Fisher's extracts from the Guild records, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1835; and Rev. E. H. Knowles' Architectural Account of the Church of Holy Trinity. There is a life of John of Stratford in Dean Hook's Archbishops of Canterbury.

The seventh century all but closes without supplying us with any authentic details as to the rise of Stratford. The earliest documentary clue to its origin is to be gleaned from a charter dated 691, according to which Egwin, the third Bishop of Worcester, obtained from Ethelred, King of Mercia, "the monastery of Stratford," standing on land above three thousand acres in extent, in exchange for a religious house he had erected at Fladbury, in Worcestershire. The best critics have doubted the authenticity of the document; but another charter of unblemished reputation, dated nearly a century later, supports its statements, and leads to the inference that Stratford owes its practical foundation to a monastic settlement. In 781, Offa, the great King of Mercia, confirmed, after much discussion, the right of Heathored, the Bishop of Worcester, to "Stretforde," then an estate of thirty hides; and in 845 another ruler of Mercia absolutely surrendered to another bishop the Stratford monastery by the Avon, to be held by him and his successors free of all secular obligations. This is the latest glimpse we obtain of this foundation, and it, perhaps, afterwards fell into decay. The Bishops of Worcester, like many others of their profession, doubtless found it more to their interests to foster a new village, and to cultivate the land about it, than to maintain monks who could not readily be turned to profit. According to tradition, this early monastery stood on the site where the church stands now, and, as in many other parts of England, the first houses at Stratford were probably erected for its servants and dependents. Their abodes were doubtless near the river, in the street that has for many centuries been known as "Old Town." The Saxon Bishops of Worcester were evidently proud of their Stratford property, and they sought with success to extend its boundaries in all directions. Records prove that the land was rich in meadows, pastures, and fisheries, and was well watered by shallow brooks. It was at no distant date that the bishop's original property, which included only the immediate environment of the monastery, obtained the name of Old Stratford, to distinguish it from Stratford-on-Avon proper, which stretched far along the north bank of the Avon. Thanes, the Anglo-Saxon country gentlemen, were easily found willing to rent under agreements for two or three lives large plots of ground of the bishop, and many of the villages retain in their nomenclature traces of this occupation. Alveston, originally called Eanulfestun, was the homestead of Eanulf, its tenant in 872, under Bishop Wearfrith. Bishopston (Bishopestune) was doubtless the site of a small homestead erected for the bishop's own residence. All the fertile land about Clifford was let in 988 to a Thane Ethelward.

Thus, before the Norman Conquest, Stratford had become a valuable portion of the property of the See of Worcester; and such was its normal condition till the middle ages closed. It appears to have been little disturbed by any of the political convulsions that overwhelmed many parts of Anglo-Saxon England in the ninth and tenth centuries. The Danes may have threatened it from a distance while passing from the conquest of Mercia into Wessex, on their first great expedition; but little is known of their route. If the mythologists be right in identifying Warwick's legendary hero, Guy, with a northern viking, Egil, whose services were enlisted on the side of Athelstan, the Stratford townsfolk may have owed him their immunity from the second invasion of his kinsmen in the tenth century; and he may have at times come among them on returning from hunting or hawking in the Forest of Arden, of which his friend and tutor Heraud is known to romance as having been a native. It is certain that the Norman Conquest passed almost silently over South Warwickshire, and the little village of Stratford showed little sign of its passage. Its lord at the time was Bishop Wulfstan, famed for his holy life, and alone of all the Anglo-Saxon prelates rewarded for his ready acquiescence in the new dominion with continuance in his office. He proved his gratitude by twice leading his militia, his county tenants, some of whom doubtless came from Stratford, in battle against the Norman king's enemies—once against the half-Breton Earl of Hereford, who sought to escape from William's yoke during his absence in Normandy in 1074, and once near Worcester against rebels from the Welsh border.



## II.

*AGRICULTURAL LIFE.*

IN 1085 the first distinct account of Stratford was put on record by the Domesday surveyors, and it supplies us with many interesting details. The district had then been for several centuries one of the Bishop of Worcester's *manors*, and all the manorial machinery was at work upon it. The township growing up there was a village community, consisting mainly of very small farmers and a few day-labourers with their families, and in all their relations of life they were under the jurisdiction of the bishop's steward, or seneschal, in virtual serfdom.



MEADOW WALK BY THE AVON, NEAR STRATFORD.

He presided over the manor court, constituted as the court baron, to which the townsmen came to supervise the payments of rent and dues, the settlement of new comers, and the distribution of land. He, too, kept order in the villages, and, with the aid of the community assembled in court leet, punished breaches of the peace. He saw that the land was properly cultivated, that the ploughs were fully yoked, and that the seed was fairly sown. Sometimes the steward's jurisdiction included a number of manors lying together. In his absence from any one of them he delegated his authority to a resident husbandman, who could at least direct all agricultural operations.

The actual extent of Stratford in William I.'s time was fourteen and a half hides, or nearly 2,000 acres. It was of smaller extent than it had been under the Mercian régime, for the neighbouring villages had now themselves become so many separate manors. Part of the land was arable, and was worked by thirty-one ploughs, of which three, belonging to the bishop, were

drawn by a team of eight oxen. The meadow land was five furlongs long and two broad. The inhabitants consisted of a priest, who, doubtless, conducted services in the chapel of the old monastery, with twenty-one villeins and seven *bordarii*. Each of these residents was the head of a family, and their number, therefore, represents a population of about one hundred and fifty. The villeins stood the higher in the social scale, and held, besides their homesteads, arable and meadow plots of land, from sixty to thirty acres in size. The *bordarii*, from the Saxon *bord*, a cottage, were cottagers who owned a cottage with a garden, and some five acres in the fields at hand. But every householder, whether villein or cottager, evidently possessed a plough. Both classes of residents were liable to small money payments to the lord of the manor, and occasionally to payments of agricultural produce, besides being called upon to labour for several days every year in the pasture and meadows cultivated in the bishop's own behalf. By the river at the same time there stood the water-mill belonging to the bishop. There the villagers were obliged to grind all their corn, and they had to pay a fee for the privilege. In 1085 the mill produced an income of ten shillings annually, and a thousand eels were also sent to Worcester year by year by those who used it. It is noticeable that the total profit derived from Stratford by Wulfstan was twenty-five pounds in the Domesday survey, an amount five times that derived from it in the days of Edward the Confessor. The advance marks a rapid progress of the settlement in the interval.

In the century and a quarter (from 1085 to 1210) following, the village does not seem to have made any giant's strides. Alveston, the obscure little village that now lies in the bend of the river nearest to Stratford in its upward course, seemed likely then to rival it in prosperity. Just before the Norman Conquest, "certain great men," says Dugdale, had withheld Alveston from the Bishops of Worcester after it had long been in their possession, but William the Conqueror returned it to Bishop Wulfstan, who generously made it over to the great Worcestershire Priory, that throughout the middle ages rivalled the see itself in the possession of broad lands. Three mills were erected by the Avon at Alveston, and eels without number were sent year by year by its inhabitants to the refectory of the priory. The boundaries of the Alveston Manor crept up, in the thirteenth century, to their still existing limits on the southern side of the bridge of Stratford (it was a rude wooden bridge at this early date), and the manorial officers planted a little colony by their end of the bridge, which was known to them and to the Elizabethans as Bridgetown. Its dwellers were all of them cottagers, and in the descriptive rental of the Worcestershire Priory compiled about 1250, the names and annual dues, which varied from five shillings to sixteenpence, are given at length. One was called Brun, another John de Pont (or, as we should say, John Bridge), another William Cut. The steward, or seneschal, who looked after this, with much surrounding property, was a native of Stratford, Nicholas by name, who held a messuage there with a garden and arable land in three neighbouring fields, for which he had to pay sixpence quarterly, to cut hay in the meadow belonging to the lord of the manor for one day, and help in stacking it, besides doing three days' reaping. The various services and payments due as rent from the husbandmen of Stratford and its neighbourhood at the time—services which seemed to increase in intricacy with the centuries, are given at length in the book of the possessions of the Worcestershire Priory, and may be quoted here as an illustration of the life led by the majority of the villagers in the infancy of the town. Of the changes in the condition of the inhabitants since the Domesday Survey, it need only be noted that many of the large estates had been let as knight's fees, that is to say, on condition of their holders performing certain military services, and that some of the villeins had become free tenants (*libere tenentes*), that is to say, men free from the imputation of serfdom, permitted to cultivate their land as they would, and paying for their farms a fixed money rental, with little or no labour services to supplement it. The villeins' labour services were exacted with vexatious regularity. If they owned sixty acres, they had to supply two men for reaping the lord's demesne, and cottagers with thirty acres one, till all the corn was reaped. On one day an additional reaping service was to be performed by villeins and

cottagers with all their families except their wives and shepherds. Each of the free tenants also had then to find a reaper, and to look after the reaping himself. The steward saw that all the labourers were fed on that occasion at the cost of the manor. The holder of every sixty acres was to provide two carts for the conveyance of the corn to the barns, and every cottager who owned a horse one cart, for the use of which he was to receive a good morning meal of bread and cheese. One day's hoeing was expected of the villein, and three days' ploughing, and if an additional day was called for, food was supplied free to the workers. Villeins and cottagers with gardens were expected to assist in cutting the hay, in carting and stacking it. When the hay had all been gathered in, each householder was to be presented with a ram, a fourpenny cheese, and a small sum of money instead of the fodder to which they were of old allowed to help themselves. No villein was permitted to bring up his child for the Church without permission of the lord of the manor. A fee had to be paid when a daughter of a villein married. On his death his best waggon was claimed by the steward in his lord's behalf, and a fine of money was exacted from his successor—if, the record wisely adds, he could pay one. Any townsman who made beer to sell paid for the privilege. But these charges exhausted the manorial demands. Fishing was free, church dues were seldom exacted, and the mills and the barns for storing grain were often placed freely at the disposal of the neighbouring population.

## III.

*MEDIÆVAL TRADE, MARKETS, AND FAIRS.*

**B**UT although agricultural pursuits chiefly occupied the people of Stratford in the thirteenth century, several of them also turned their attention to trade, and in an account of the settlement rendered to the Bishop of Worcester about 1251, we can trace the rise of several industries that acquired importance later. There were numerous weavers, tanners, and tailors. There were carpenters and dyers, whitesmiths and blacksmiths, wheelwrights and fleshmongers, shoemakers and coopers. The mill employed a number of hands as millers and fullers.

The Bishops of Worcester were clearly anxious to encourage such pursuits. Before



ASTON-CANTLOW CHURCH.

the close of the twelfth century they obtained from Richard I. the special privilege of a weekly market upon the Thursday for the town, a privilege for which the citizens paid the bishops an annual toll of sixteen shillings; and early in the thirteenth century the various dues of such inhabitants as were anxious to engage in trade were commuted by the lord of the manor for a fixed annual sum of twelvepence, payable quarterly. These holdings, which consisted of little more than a house and very small gardens, were known as *burgages*, and their holders as *burgesses*. Such a tenure bore, in the West of England, the name of "the custom of Bristol," a commercial port only second in importance at the time to London; and its introduction into Stratford marked its mercantile progress. Meanwhile the national records do not concern themselves with Stratford very much. The Hundred Rolls of Edward I., which were drawn up in many counties to form a survey as complete as that of the Domesday Book, barely deal with Warwickshire and all they tell us concerning Stratford is that the king's justices had regulated by standard the manufacture of beer in the town, and that the steward of the Bishop of



Worcester had not enforced the regulation. The entry adds that John, a clergyman and bailiff of the Bishop of Worcester, had taken ten shillings from a man of Aston-Cantlow, doubtless a political offender imprisoned at Stratford, as a bribe to permit him to escape. Both these incidents are stated to have taken place after the battle of Evesham, from which it may be perhaps inferred that the people of Stratford had not favoured the king's party in that contest, or had at least treated the law with contempt amid the confusion in which the midlands were plunged by the strife between Henry III. and his barons, which closed in favour of the former at Evesham in 1265.

A number of privileges, which further indicated the march of the city in a commercial direction, were conferred upon it at frequent intervals in the thirteenth century. Stratford was then endowed with a series of annual fairs, the chief stimulants of trade in the middle ages. As early as 1216 a grant was obtained by the Bishop of Worcester for the holding of a yearly fair, "beginning on the eve of the Holy Trinity"—*i.e.*, on the Saturday following Whitsuntide—"and to continue for the two next days ensuing." Other fairs were added as the century progressed. In 1224 a fair was permitted on the eve of St. Augustine, the 26th of May, "and on the day and morrow after." In 1242 and in 1271, this order was repeated for the eve of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross—14th of September—"the day, and two days following," and "for the eve of the Ascension of our Lord, commonly called Holy Thursday, and upon the day and morrow after." The grant of the fair on Trinity Sunday was renewed in 1272, and in mediæval times it always proved the busiest of the four gatherings, although that of the Holy Cross has continued longest. Out of each of these celebrations, the Bishop of Worcester made an annual profit of about nine shillings and fourpence. Dugdale, while chronicling the grants of these privileges, which made the town an important trading centre for the neighbouring country, makes an interesting digression as to the history of English fairs, which is of special interest to the students of mediæval Stratford. He traces their "first occasioning" to the "concourse of people to keep the Festival of the Church's dedication," "vulgarly called the Wake"—a boisterous merrymaking that is undoubtedly a survival of the religious gatherings of the pre-Christian Teutons. The church at Stratford, as all the civilized world knows, is dedicated to the Holy Trinity. It probably was created out of the old Saxon monastery that has been assigned to its site. The present structure may fairly be judged with Dugdale, from "the fabric of the tower steeple," to be of "little less than the Conqueror's time." It was undoubtedly doing active service at the time when the first Stratford fair was instituted—that fair which was to be held about Trinity Sunday, the festival of the Church's dedication, and the date consequently of the village wake. That Sunday was one of the days devoted to the fair, no uncommon feature of English mediæval life, strongly supports the theory, so far as Stratford is concerned, of the religious origin of this commercial institution. And if the common characteristics of all English mediæval fairs are applicable to the town, this singular connection of the spiritual with the worldly side of mediæval life was rendered closer by the traders' practice of exposing their wares for sale in the churchyard, and of chaffering and bargaining within the church itself. The Statute of Winchester attempted in vain in 1285 to restrain this extravagance, but it persisted till the Reformation. In a very early printed "Comment on the Ten Commandments by way of dialogues between Dives and Pauper" (1493), the "profane custom" is forcibly condemned. Dives asks Pauper: "What sayst thou of them that hold markets and fairs in Holy Church and in Sanctuary?" Pauper replies: "Both the buyer and the seller, and men of Holy Church that maintain them, or suffer them when they might let it, be accursed. They make God's house a den of thieves." To which Dives answers: "And I dread me that full often by such fairs God's house is made a tavern of gluttons. For the Merchants and Chapmen keep there with them their wives and lemans both night and day." The riotous times spent at Stratford a century later, when the fairs were in process, make this a very pertinent description.

Thus, the close of the thirteenth century guaranteed the future prosperity of Stratford. The rivalry with Alveston was then practically over, and its rapid development was assured. The Bishops of Worcester had shown themselves exceptionally vigilant over its interests, and it was proving year by year more profitable to them. In 1251 the arable land returned to them more than £40; in 1299 more than £57. The mills had grown in number: there were three for grinding corn in the building by the river, and one for fulling elsewhere. They yielded at times as much as £13 6s. 8d., an enormous increase on their ancient profits. Arable, meadow, and pasture all became richer with cultivation. The lords of the manor found it convenient to make a park in the neighbourhood for hunting purposes, and therefore paid it frequent visits. One bishop threatened, not always with due effect, all who "broke his park and stole his deer," as Falstaff and Falstaff's creator did later, with excommunication.

The bishops in the early part of the fourteenth century exceeded their predecessors' generosity towards the trading part of the population. In 1314 the Thursday market, which had fallen into disuse, was reinaugurated, and shortly afterwards permission was secured the townsfolk to hold another fair for the long period of fifteen days, to begin yearly on the eve of SS. Peter and Paul, at the latter end of June.

## IV.

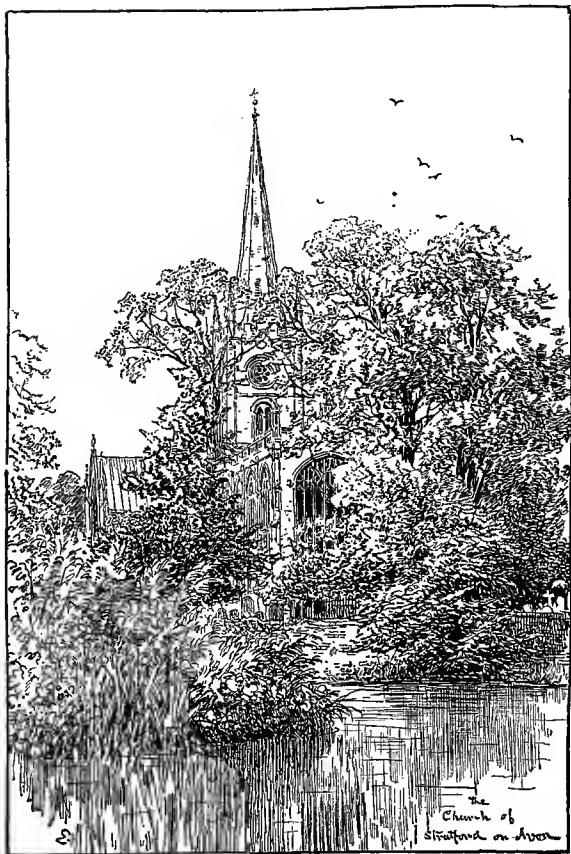
*RALPH, ROBERT, AND JOHN OF STRATFORD.*

NOR were the inhabitants any longer solely dependent for their welfare on the benevolence of the lords of the manor. Villenage gradually disappeared in the reign of Edward III., and all who were not burgesses became free tenants or copyholders, paying definite rents for house and land. And from these classes sprang men capable of stimulating of their own motion the prosperity of their birthplace. Three fourteenth-century prelates, one of whom rose to be Archbishop of Canterbury, and the two others to be Bishops of London and Chichester respectively, were natives of Stratford, and in days when personal nomenclature had not yet crystallized into its existing shape, borrowed of the town their surnames. Ralph of Stratford, John of Stratford, and Robert of Stratford, were closely related. Robert and Isabel, of the richer inhabitants of Stratford, were the parents of the two latter, while Ralph has been claimed as a younger brother of their father. The elder Robert appears to have led the way in the local work of benevolence. He it is to whom the foundation, in 1296, of the chapel of the guild—that is, of the religious fraternity of which we shall speak hereafter—and of the hospital or almshouses attached to it, has been attributed. But the benefactions of his sons and his brother were in many points more remarkable, and are better known to authentic history.

There is little need to pursue their careers in detail here; but since they gave so practical an effect “to a more than ordinary affection” for the town, they well deserve mention. It must always be profitable, too, to study them as illustrating the rich opportunities of advancement in the political and ecclesiastical worlds open in the middle ages to ability, even when revealing itself in the sons of village farmers. All three were educated at the Universities, and their successes there proved stepping-stones to high preferments in the Church and State. Ralph obtained a canonry at St. Paul’s, which led to the bishopric of the metropolis. Robert’s first benefice was the living of Stratford itself, bestowed on him by the Bishop of Worcester in 1319, and in that office he was the earliest of the three relatives to give tangible form to his regard for his birthplace. Long streets were in the course of formation at Stratford in the reign of Edward II. One ran from the Holy Trinity Church towards the north-east. Henley Street, whence Henley-in-Arden could be most readily reached, had tenements on both sides of it; and Greenhill Street, afterwards Moor Town’s End, with Old Town, had long been inhabited thoroughfares. Robert resolved to roughly pave these roads. By obtaining permission, in 1332, to impose a toll for four years “on sundry vendible commodities,” brought by the agricultural neighbours into the town, “he defrayed the charge thereof,” and the tax was renewed for short periods, at his suggestion, in 1335 and 1337, after he had left the city to exercise higher dignities. From the Archdeaconry of Canterbury he ultimately rose to the See of Chichester. But, like his brother John, he aimed at political advancement as well as ecclesiastical, and finally filled the Chancellorship of England. John of Stratford, the most distinguished of the trio, made a name at Oxford by his knowledge of civil law, and was Bishop of Winchester from 1323 to 1333, in which year he became Archbishop of Canterbury. He played a prominent part in the politics of his time. It was he who, as Bishop of Winchester, drew up the Bill of Deposition against Edward II., and Marlowe gives us a glimpse of him in a heartbreaking scene of his play of “Edward II.” It was

he who undertook more foreign embassies than any of his contemporaries, and could boast of thirty-two journeys made across the Channel in the public service. It was John of Stratford who, when Edward III. left England on his first French expedition in 1338, virtually governed the country as Lord Chancellor. But the king was dissatisfied with the small amount of money that his councillors then managed to collect for his wars, and suddenly returned in 1341 to dismiss all his ministers, charging them with dishonesty in their offices. The archbishop boldly denied Edward's accusation, and bade him remember his father's fate, and the rights of the people of England. And the king had at length to yield to John of Stratford, who takes his place in English history as one of the sturdy defenders of the constitution.

## V.

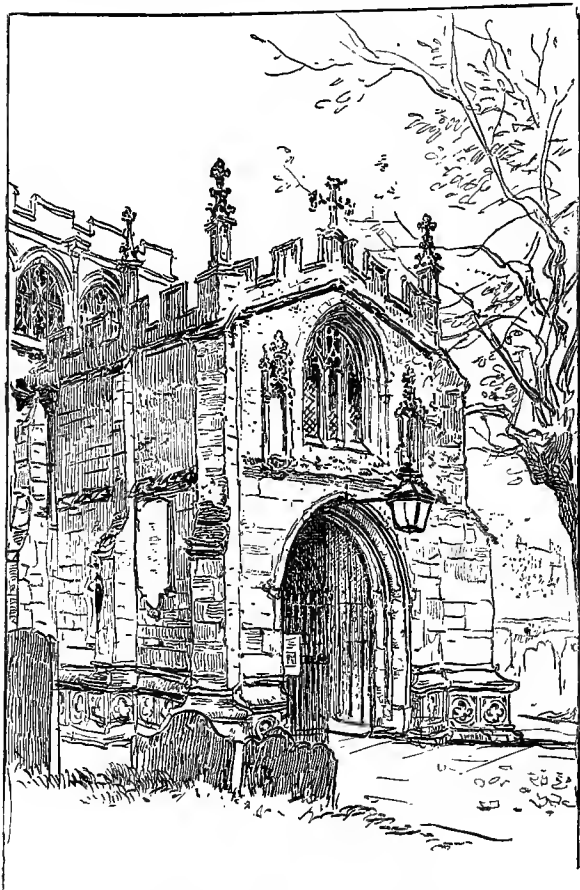
*THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY.*

IT was the same John of Stratford who, before his death in 1345, with the co-operation of his brother Robert and uncle Ralph, conferred very solid benefactions on Stratford. The church, although at the time, as the evidence of some of the stone-work proves, a substantial erection, was not fully completed. It had even then many architectural pretensions. The tower still retains its Normaneseque panel arches, with their Early English lights, which probably date from the further side of 1200. But John of Stratford desired to make the structure more stable and more elaborate. Although cruciform in shape, it had but an embryo south aisle, and the north aisle was very narrow. The latter he not only widened, but set up there a chapel to the Holy Virgin, whose building and later repair the Bishops of Worcester encouraged by grants of indulgences to those who contributed money to effect that object. The south aisle he built anew, and set up there a chapel in honour of St. Thomas à Becket, with

whom he had some qualities in common. The tower he renovated, and probably added the wooden spire, with which Shakespeare and his contemporaries were acquainted. But his work was not wholly confined to mere structural improvements. In 1332, with permission of the Bishop of Worcester and Edward III., he formed a chantry of the chapel of the church, dedicated to St. Thomas the Martyr. It is difficult nowadays to appreciate the spirit that prompted such a foundation. Its object was to endow five priests to chant for all time at this chapel altar masses for the souls of the founder and his friends. John of Stratford, who had acquired much property about Stratford, appointed for the maintenance of his chantry-priests one messuage in Stratford, with the Manor of Inge, the modern Ingon, by Welcombe, and among those whose souls his masses were expected to free from purgatory were, besides himself, his brother Robert, his father and mother, the Kings of England, and the Bishops of Worcester. Of the five priests, one was to be warden of the chapel and another subwarden. John of Stratford, in spite of his political cares, watched over the chantry with parental affection. Year by year he added to its possession of land and houses in Stratford, and his friends followed his example. One of these was Nicholas of Dudley, parson of King's

Swynford, in Worcestershire, a connection of a family with a notorious career before it, who made over much property to the chantry about his native village of Dudley. And the patronage of the church of Stratford, John purchased of the Bishop of Worcester, and gave to his chantry priests, who thus fully controlled the parish church. Other inhabitants of Stratford followed the example set by the three prelates of Stratford, and made many sacrifices to adorn their church. True penitents were urged by the Bishop of Worcester in 1321 to contribute to the building and the repair of the belfry, and in 1381 to adorn and illuminate the altar of the Virgin Mary.

In the next century, under Edward IV., the warden of the college, Dr. Thomas Balsall,



PORCH OF STRATFORD CHURCH.

“added a fair and beautiful choir, re-built from the ground at his own cost,” which still survives. He clearly employed master masons of different schools. One was faithful to the older models, to the early decorated style, and of his work is Balsall’s tomb, who died in 1491, the north and south doors, and, doubtless, the font at which Shakespeare was baptized. The other artificer aimed at greater novelty. He studied his bestiary, and perched paunchy toads on buttresses, or transferred to stone dragon-flies from the river in very grotesque attitudes. His angels are whimsical, and if the carvings in the stalls be his, he delighted in picturing the least refined aspects of humanity. Ralph Collingwood, at the close of the fifteenth century, gave the collegiate church its final touches. He renewed the north porch and the nave. “The low decorated clerestory was removed, the walls pulled down to the crowns of the arches, rude angels (by some ‘prentice hand) were inserted to carry the pillasters, and the walls were panelled with large lantern windows, with a flattish roof” (Knowles’ *Architectural Account of*

Holy Trinity Church). In pursuit of Doctor Balsall’s “pious intent,” Collingwood improved the church service by appointing “four children choristers, to be daily assistants in the celebration of divine service,” and placed them under the supervision of the college; “which choristers,” according to Collingwood’s ordination, “should always come by two and two together into the choir to Matins and Vespers on such days as the same were to be sung there, according to the Ordinale Sarum; and at their entrance into the church, bowing their knees before the crucifix, each of them say a Pater Noster and an Ave. And for their better regulation did he order and appoint, that they should sit quietly in the choir, saying the Matins and Vespers of our Lady distinctly, and afterwards be observant in the offices of the choir: that they should not be sent upon any occasion whatsoever into the town: that at dinner and supper they should constantly be in the college to wait at the table: and to read upon the Bible or some other authentic book: that they should not come into the buttery to draw beer for themselves or anybody else: that after dinner they should go to the singing school: and that their school-master should be one of the priests or clerks appointed by the discretion of the warden, being a man able to instruct them in singing to the organ: as also that they should have



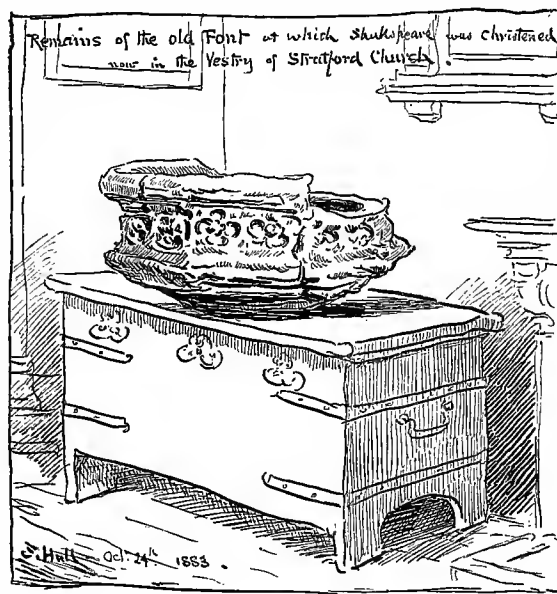




one bedchamber in the church, whereunto they were to repair in winter-time at eight of the clock, and in summer at nine: in which lodging to be two beds, wherein they were to sleep by couples: and that before they did put off their clothes they should all say the prayer of *De profundis* with a loud voice, with the prayers and orisons of the faithful, and afterwards say thus, 'God have mercy of the soul of Ralph Collingwood, our Founder, and Master Thomas Balsall, a special benefactor to the same.'" For the maintenance of the choristers, lands at Stratford, Binton, and Drayton were assigned.

Ralph of Stratford was not behind his relatives in his generosity to his native town. In 1351, he built for John's chantry priests a "house of square stone for the habitation of these priests, adjoining to the churchyard." The ten carpenters and ten masons, with the labourers, who doubtless came from London to erect the edifice, were placed, while at Stratford, under the king's special protection. The building came to be known as the College of Stratford, and was familiar to the Elizabethans and their successors, as the map of 1769 amply proves. In 1415, Henry V. confirmed all the privileges of the chantry and the college, and the church of Stratford then bore the honoured epithet of Collegiate, since it was under the supervision of a college or chapter of priests, in much the same manner as Westminster Abbey and St. George's Chapel, Windsor, are to this day.

Although Shakespeare only knew Stratford after the Reformation had stripped it of these many ecclesiastical distinctions—distinctions which were so many tributes of affection paid to their birthplace by his ancient fellow-townsmen—the majority of them had been solidly embodied in stone, over which in his time a picturesque old age was just beginning to creep. They were monuments enshrining traditions not wholly lifeless, and may well have helped a poet to realize the setting of scenes like King John's death under the windows of Swinstead Abbey, or Gaunt's last moments in Ely House.



## VI.

## THE GUILD.



BUT mediæval life at Stratford in the later middle ages developed a new feature, which gives it by far its greatest attraction to the student of English municipal history. Local self-government was in the middle ages the aim of every English town which deserved the name; but so far as our investigations have led us, no machinery has been visible at Stratford to advance the townsmen in that direction. Before the fourteenth century, however, an institution had arisen and taken formal shape in their midst, which was to deprive the Bishops of Worcester of their ancient rule. The Guild, that then went by the triple name of the Holy Cross, the Blessed Virgin, and St. John the Baptist, and which still gives its name to the picturesque chapel in Church Street, embodied the emancipating influence. It very possibly represents the union of three distinct guilds, each bearing one of the names cited; but we have no historical evidence of their

combination, and for our present purpose it is sufficient to regard it as a single institution. The early English guilds must not be confounded with the modern survival in the city of London. The guilds owed their origin to popular religious observances, and developed into institutions of local self-help, societies that were at once religious and friendly, "collected for the love of God and our soul's need." Members of both sexes—and the women were almost as numerous as the men—were admitted on payment of a small annual subscription. This primarily secured for them the performances of certain religious rites, which they literally valued more than life. While they lived, and more especially after their death, lighted tapers were duly distributed in their behalf, before the altars of the Virgin and of their patron saints in the parish church. A poor man in the middle ages found it very difficult, without the intervention of the guilds, to keep this road to salvation always open. Relief of the poor and of necessitous members also formed part of the guild's objects, and gifts were frequently awarded to members anxious to make pilgrimage to Canterbury, or at times the spinster members received dowries from the association. The

social spirit was mainly fostered by a great annual feast, which all members were expected to attend in special uniform. These gatherings began their proceedings by marching with banners flying in procession to church, and the regulation which compelled the members to attend the funeral of any of their fellows united them among themselves in close bonds of intimacy. The guilds were strictly lay associations. Priests in many towns were excluded from them, and, where they were admitted, held no more prominent places than their lay brethren. Guilds employed mass priests to celebrate their religious services, but they were the paid servants of the fraternity. Every member was expected to leave at his death as much property as he could spare to the guilds, and thus in course of time they became wealthy corporations. They all were governed by their own elected officers—wardens, aldermen, beadles, and clerks—and a common council formed of their representatives kept watch over their property and rights. Although these religious guilds did not concern themselves with trade, in many instances there grew up under their influence smaller and subsidiary guilds, each formed of members engaged in one trade, and aiming at the protection of their interests in their crafts. Under the name of craft guilds, these offshoots often, as in London, survived the decay of the religious association, and their pedigrees became obscured and credited with greater originality and antiquity than they could justly claim. Guilds of the religious kind can be traced far back in Anglo-Saxon times. Ine and Alfred mention them in their legal codes. But the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries saw their palmiest days. Chaucer includes some of their members among his Canterbury pilgrims.

“An Haberdasher and a Carpenter,  
A Webbe, a Deyer, and a Tapiser,  
Were all y-clothed in o livere  
Of a solempne and grete fraternitie.

\* \* \* \*

“Wel semed eche of hem a fayre burgeis,  
To sitten in a gild halle, on the deis.  
Everich, for the wisdom that he can,  
Was shapelich for to ben an alderman.”

At Stratford the guild claimed a very ancient history. “The guild has lasted,” wrote its chief officers in 1389, “and its beginning was, from time whereunto the memory of man reacheth not.” Its muniments now collected in the birthplace at Stratford prove that it had been in existence early in the thirteenth century, and that bequests had then been made to it. William Sude, who lived in the reign of Henry III., is the name of the author of the earliest extant deed of gift, and he gave a messuage of the yearly value of sixpence. Many of his contemporaries followed this example, for the sake of their own souls or those of their fathers and mothers. The Bishops of Worcester encouraged such gifts, and apparently contrived that some of the guild’s revenues should be shared, with the indigent persons who received alms in accordance with the fundamental principle of the institution, by poor priests ordained by them without any sure title. Godfrey Giffard, on 7th October, 1270, issued letters of indulgence for forty days to all sincere penitents who had duly confessed their sins, and had conferred benefits on the Guild of the Holy Cross of Stratford-upon-Avon. Before Edward I.’s reign closed, the guild was wealthy in houses and lands. The elder Robert of Stratford had then already laid for it the foundation of its special chapel, and of the neighbouring almshouses. These buildings, with the hall of meeting, called the Rode or Rood Hall (rood being equivalent to cross), were doubtless situated in Church Street, where the guildhall and guild buildings subsequently stood as they stand at this day. In 1332, Edward III. gave the corporation a charter which confirmed its right to all its possessions, and to direct all its own business. In 1389, Richard II. sent commissioners to report upon the ordinances of the guilds throughout England, and the return for Stratford is still extant,

though the historians of the town have persistently overlooked it. The details are so picturesque that I make no apology for quoting it in full.

"These are the ordinances," the document begins, "of the brethren and sisters of the Guild of the Holy Cross of Stratford.

"*First*: Each of the brethren who wishes to remain in the guild, shall give fourpence a year, payable four times in the year; namely, a penny on the feast of St. Michael, a penny on the feast of St. Hillary, a penny at Easter, and a penny on the feast of St. John Baptist. Out of which payments there shall be made and kept up one wax candle, which shall be done in worshipful honour of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the blessed Virgin and of the Holy Cross. And the wax candle shall be kept alight every day throughout the year, at every mass in the church, before the blessed Cross; so that God and the blessed Virgin, and the venerated Cross, may keep and guard all the brethren and sisters of the guild from every ill. And whoever of the brethren or sisters neglects to come at the above-named times [when the payments are due], shall pay one penny.



THE CHAPEL OF THE GUILD. INTERIOR.

"It is also ordained by the brethren and sisters of the guild, that, when any of them dies, the wax candle before-named, together with eight smaller ones, shall be carried from the church to the house of him that is dead; and there they shall be kept alight before the body of the dead until it is carried to the church; and the wax candles shall be carried and kept alight until the body is buried, and afterwards shall be set before the Cross. Also, all the brethren of the guild are bound to follow the body to church, and to pray for his soul until the body is buried. And whoever does not fulfil this, shall pay one halfpenny.

"It is also ordained by the brethren and sisters, that if any poor man in the town dies, or if any stranger has not means of his own out of which to pay for a light to be kept burning before his body, the brethren and sisters shall, for their souls' health, whosoever he may be, find four wax candles, and one sheet, and a hearsecloth to lay over the coffin until the body is buried.

"It is further ordained by the brethren and sisters, that each of them shall give twopence a year, at a meeting which shall be held once a year; namely, at a feast which shall be held in Easter week, in such manner that brotherly love shall be cherished among them, and evil-speaking be driven out; that peace shall always dwell among them, and true love be upheld. And every sister of the guild shall bring with her to this feast a great tankard; and all the tankards shall be filled with ale; and afterwards the ale shall be given to the poor. So likewise shall the brethren do; and their tankards shall, in like manner, be

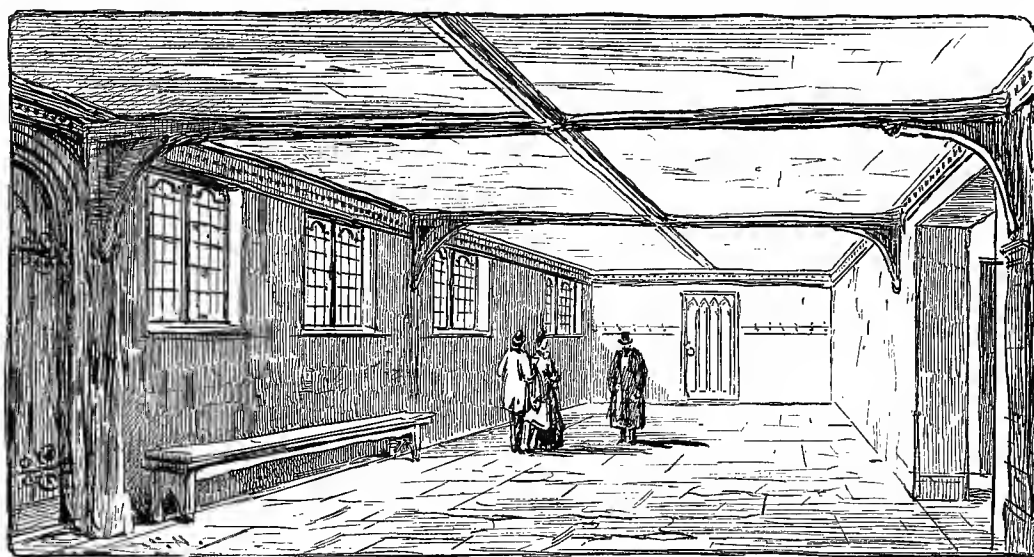
filled with ale, and this also shall be given to the poor. But, before that ale shall be given to the poor, and before any brother or sister shall touch the feast in the hall where it is accustomed to be held, all the brethren and sisters there gathered together shall put up their prayers, that God and the blessed Virgin and the venerated Cross, in whose honour they have come together, will keep them from all ills and sins. And if any sister does not bring her tankard, as is above said, she shall pay a halfpenny. Also, if any brother or sister shall, after the bell has sounded, quarrel, or stir up a quarrel, he shall pay a halfpenny.

“It is also ordained, that no one shall remain in this guild unless he is a man of good behaviour.

“It is moreover ordained, that when one of the brethren dies, the officers shall summon a third part of the brethren, who shall watch near the body, and pray for his soul, through the night. Whoever, having been summoned, neglects to do this, shall pay a halfpenny.

“It is ordained by the Common Council of the whole guild, that two of the brethren shall be Aldermen; and six other brethren shall be chosen, who shall manage all the affairs of the guild with the Aldermen; and whoever of them is absent on any day agreed among themselves for a meeting, shall pay fourpence.

“If any brother or sister brings with him a guest, without leave of the steward, he shall pay a halfpenny. Also, if any stranger, or servant, or youth, comes in, without the knowledge of the officers, he



THE GUILDHALL.

shall pay a halfpenny. Also, if any brother or sister is bold enough to take the seat of another, he shall pay a halfpenny.

“Also, if it happens that any brother or sister has been robbed, or has fallen into poverty, then, so long as he bears himself well and rightly towards the brethren and sisters of the guild, they shall find him in food and clothing and what else he needs.”

These ordinances, providing for kindly gifts of beer to the poor, for the preservation of good fellowship among all the members and for their participation in each others' joys and griefs, vividly put before us the simple piety and charity of the Stratford townspeople. The regulations for the government of the guild by two wardens or aldermen and six others prove the progress of the town in the direction of local self-government. It is not difficult to perceive how an association, which grew to include all the substantial householders of the district, necessarily acquired much civil jurisdiction; how its members referred to its council their disputes with one another; how the aldermen were gradually regarded as the administrators of the municipal police; or how the burgesses preferred this new régime to servile dependence on the steward of the lord of the manor. The college priests were very jealous of its growing influence, and when the guild resisted the payment of tithes brought a lawsuit against it to compel their payment. But this seemed to be the fraternity's only obligation. The ledgers or account-books of the guild are still extant for the fourteenth

and fifteenth centuries, and indicate free and vigorous development for at least one hundred and fifty years. The buildings which were erected for the meetings of members, the chief room of which became the guildhall, were made more elaborate after 1400. The almshouses set up near at hand for its pensioners were extended. Towards the close of the fifteenth century the chapel was renewed. All classes were then admitted to its privileges, and one curious feature of the conditions of membership at the time was that the souls of the dead could be made free of the fraternity on payment from the living as easily as the living themselves. Thus, early in the fifteenth century six persons surnamed Whittington, the dead children of John Whittington, of Stratford, were all admitted to the benefit of the guild's prayers for the sum of ten shillings. Before the middle ages closed, the fame of the guild had grown so wide as to attract to its ranks noblemen like George, Duke of Clarence, Edward IV.'s brother, and his wife, with Edward, Lord Warwick, and Margaret, two of their children; and so distinguished a judge as Sir Thomas Lyttleton was one of the members. Merchants of towns as far distant as Bristol and Peterborough joined it, and few towns or villages of Warwickshire were unrepresented on its roll of members.

The fee for admission at its flourishing epochs varied from six shillings and eightpence to four pounds, according to the wealth of the candidates. Those artificers and traders unable to pay the entrance fee in money were allowed to defray it in work. Thus, in 1408, Simon Gove, carpenter, was admitted on his undertaking to build a porch at the door of the guild, and in 1409, John Iremonger was admitted on covenanting to build a house on the guild ground, at the end of Henley Street. Five years later, John Ovyrtou, a cook, of Warwick, and his wife, were received into the fraternity on condition of cooking the annual dinner, for which they were to receive the hood of the guild—the chief part of its distinctive uniform—and their expenses. In 1427, several weavers were made free of the guild on condition of supplying cloth for the members' hoods and a banner with paintings on it. In other years, building material—tiles, plaster of Paris, stone—was taken instead of the fees. Gifts in kind from the prosperous members were of frequent occurrence. Silver cups, silver spoons, ecclesiastical vestments, missals, statues of saints, and wax for candles were often given by novitiates. Contributions to the annual feasts of corn, malt, salt, white or red wine, were also welcomed. In 1416, the guild received from five members "a great pot for frumetty, a broad dish of mascolyn, one basin, one board-cloth, and one towel"; and in 1426, eight couples of rabbits, two ewes with lamb, and a boar. In 1421, the presents included a silver chalice and a coat of armour, and in 1474, seven pewter dishes and ten pewter saucers. A schedule of "the diverse goodes and juellies beyng in the Gildehalle" in 1434 is remarkable for the number and richness of its contents. Nor was there any falling off in the bequests of houses and lands. The guild acquired in 1481 the rectory and chapelry of Little Wilmecote, where the Ardens had property subsequently, with all its tithes and profits. In 1419 a tenement in Church Street, and in 1478 a shop in the Middle Row, came into its possession, and, later, much of High Street and Chapel Lane—then called Dead Lane or Walker Street—owned the guild as its landlord. Its inner constitution did not undergo much alteration, until quite late in the fifteenth century. New ordinances were promulgated in 1444; and while they define with more precision than the former ones the offices of the guild, the mode of election to them, and their duties, they differ from their predecessors mainly in the increased importance attached to the priests or chaplains, now five in number, employed by the guild, and perhaps prove that its ancient independence of ecclesiasticism was in jeopardy. The chaplains were to perform five daily masses hour by hour, from six o'clock to ten in the morning. They were to live together in one house, under as strict a discipline concerning hours for sleep and meals as the choristers in the college by the churchyard. They had to walk in procession with the guild in their copes and surplices, with crosses and banners, on the four principal

feasts of the year, and to officiate with the priests of the college at the funeral of every member and of the pensioners in the almshouses. They were to be present at none of the county wakes, nor to say mass out of Stratford without the guild's permission. The guild had now its master, aldermen, and proctors, elected yearly. Every new member was to be admitted in the presence of the master, the clerk, and at least two aldermen. No member could be chosen alderman unless he had first served the office of proctor. The proctors were to receive and account for, on the Monday following the nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24th), the silver money received for providing candles, and all the rents of the guild. They were to make an annual inventory of the property. Their duties also included the repair of all the tenements of the Corporation, and the arrangements for the feasts and dinners, of the dates of which they were duly to inform all the members. The master and aldermen met in council every quarter-day at least, and absentees without excuse were fined forty pence. The master saw to the purchase of cloth for the members' hoods. The oath taken on admission was to the effect that the brother or sister would truly pay his fine; that he would seek in all things the profit of the fraternity; that he would refer all his disputes with fellow-members to the master; and that he would sue none of his brethren without leave of the master and aldermen, upon pain of a fine of twenty shillings. The date of the annual feast was altered to the 6th July, the day of St. Peter and St. Paul. Several regulations were issued later to prevent the "great inconvenience and hurt that grow to this guild by private affection and grant of the master and part of his brethren," by which land and houses at low rents were given to their friends. By far the most important of the new objects of the guild in the fifteenth century was the organization of a grammar school for the children of the members. Thomas Jollyffe is the name of the member always associated with its foundation, but it was in existence before the date (1453) usually assigned to its origin. Attendance was free, and the schoolmaster was forbidden to take anything from his pupils. The master of the guild paid him an annual salary of ten pounds. It was at the guild school, in a somewhat altered shape, that Shakspeare was afterwards educated.

When the fifteenth century closed, the days of the guild's prosperity were numbered. Religious feeling was declining, and the priests exerted too much influence over the fraternity to allow the laity to confide in it very freely. The fee charged for admission had fallen on the average from twenty-five shillings to twenty-five pence, and yet there were far fewer candidates than twenty years before. This decline may also be, in part, attributed to the subsidiary guilds or companies which were rising up among the members, and separating the great fraternity into small cliques. The traders were finding it to their advantage to combine together in their own interests, and at first the parent guild appears to have encouraged the practice. We know that one room of their buildings, where one "John Smyth, *alias* Colyere, first made a clock, having the hand towards the street and figures all gilded," was known as the Drapers' Chamber as early as 1419, and was probably so called because members practising that trade were permitted to assemble there to regulate their business arrangements. In the sixteenth century every commercial pursuit had its company at Stratford, and when the old guild was dissolved they lived on and shared some of its traditions and repute.

Thus, when the middle ages were at an end, Stratford-upon-Avon was a midland town of no little importance. All the simpler crafts were represented among its inhabitants. It had a collegiate church remarkable for its recent adornment, and a guild chapel, with grammar school and almshouses at its side. The borough could look back on a career of steady growth some seven or eight centuries in duration. Religious fervour had been the moving spirit in its progress since the days that it came into being, as the offshoot of a monastic settlement. Bishops had matured it in its infancy and in its youth, and those of its children who had made a name for themselves in the outer world owed their

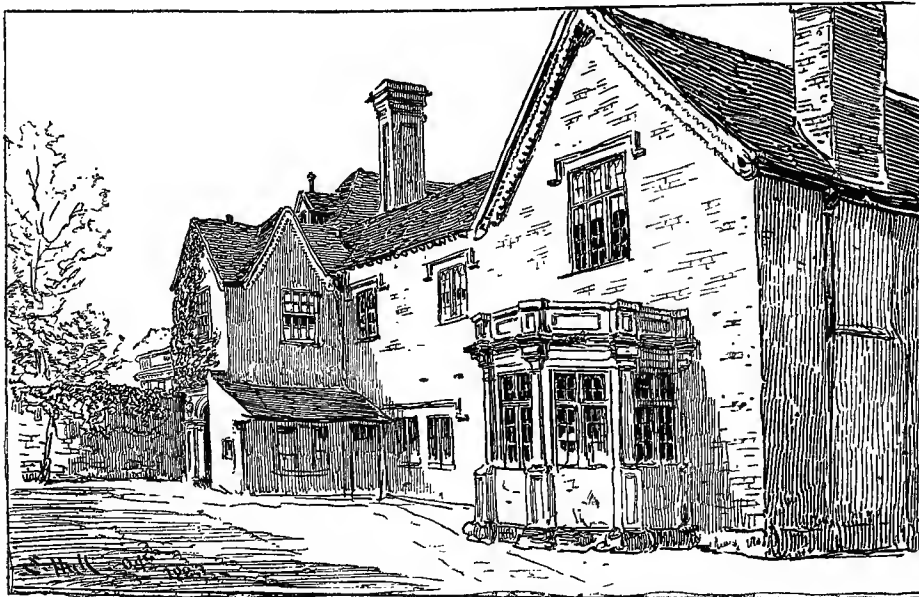


successes to Church preferment. Its loftiest structures—and it had in its manhood no lack of them—were raised to honour the most sacred of contemporary beliefs. The institution of the guild and its embryo attempts at self-government rose out of an ardent longing for the soul's salvation. The fraternity of the Holy Cross, material memorials of which were always within Shakespeare's view while he lived at Stratford, was, with its perpetual seeking after good fellowship, a humanizing influence which no temporal dissolution could quickly ruin. It fell upon evil days, as we shall see, in 1547, but only to be transformed a few years later into the sole governing body of the town. Did not its traditions leave their impress on the mind of the householder under the shadow of its chapel, whose writings, fifty years later, gave a very large interpretation to the moving spirit of the mediæval fraternity?

## VII.

*SIR HUGH CLOPTON'S BENEFACTIONS.*

BY the beginning of the sixteenth century Stratford had taken a shape which changed little during the succeeding two hundred years.\* Almost all the chief buildings, and many of the dwelling-houses, which were familiar to Shakespeare, had then long proved their stability. Two structures alone showed traces of youth, and the parish church marks of recent renovation. From the neighbouring village of Clopton came to Stratford, about 1480, Sir Hugh Clopton, the last of its early benefactors, and to him the latest structural improve-



SOME REMAINS OF THE OLD BUILDING AT THE REAR OF CLOPTON HOUSE.

ments owed their execution. His biography is an interesting one. His energetic devotion of great abilities to commerce and commercial speculations connects him very closely with the modern merchant, and removes him far from any real relationship with the less adventurous mediæval trader. He traced his pedigree back to Robert of Clopton, a

\* For the early part of the sixteenth century, Jeaffreson's Report, Toulmin-Smith's "Account of the Guilds," and Dugdale, have been, as before, my chief authorities. For the general social history of the town I have depended on Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps' invaluable *Life of Shakespeare* (1848); on his "New Place" (1864); on his publications containing the Chamberlain's accounts from 1564-1618, and the Council Books (A and B); on his *Calendar of the Stratford Documents*; and on his "Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare" (1883). Stratford is exceptionally fortunate in having attracted the services of so eminent a topographer as Mr. Phillipps, although I believe the detailed thoroughness of his work on the subject to be comparatively little known. I have also found of service Mr. Furnivall's editions of Harrison's "England" and of Stubbes's "Anatomie of Abuses," published by the New Shakspeare Society; W. C. Hazlitt's *Inedited Tracts illustrating Old English Manners*, published by the Roxburgh Society; Nathan Drake's "Shakespeare and His Times"; Roach Smith's "Rural Life of Shakespeare"; and Professor Hales's essays on Stratford, reprinted in his "Notes and Essays on Shakespeare" (1884).

substantial yeoman, who, in 1228, obtained from Peter de Montfort, apparently a relative of the great Simon, the Manor of Clopton, about a mile to the north-east of Stratford. Of the ninth generation in descent, Hugh was a younger son. His elder brother, Thomas, who inherited the family estates and the great Clopton Manor House, was religiously inclined, and built, in the first instance, an oratory in his manor house, and afterwards a "fair chapel," in which he obtained Pope Sixtus IV.'s permission to celebrate divine service. Hugh turned his attention, from an early age, to trade, and made his fortune as a mercer in London. He was Lord Mayor in 1492, never married, and devoted his leisure and his wealth to philanthropy. Stratford was his country home. There he erected, about 1483, "a pretty house of brick and timber, wherein he lived in his latter days," and obtained lands in other parts of the town, and in Wilmecote and Bridgetown. His "pretty house," the chief building in the town, was, within the first quarter of the sixteenth century, known as New Place, and became Shakespeare's property in 1597. It stood in Chapel Street, at the corner of Chapel Lane, and at the opposite corner of the lane was the chapel of the guild. Clopton hoped to end his days there, and in his will stated his desire to be buried "in the parish church of Stratford within the chapel of our lady, between the altar there and the chapel of the Trinity." But the fates were against the fulfilment of his hope, and, dying in London in 1496, he finally "bequeathed" his body to the chapel of St. Katherine, in the parish church of St. Margaret, Lothbury. But New Place was far from being Clopton's sole contribution to Stratford. The chapel standing over against his house, and belonging to the guild, of which he was a prominent member, needed restoration in the last days of the fifteenth century, and he readily defrayed the expenses of the work. The chancel had been renovated about 1450, and that he did not touch, but the nave he determined to rebuild. Death overtook him before the structure was finished, but by his will he provided for its completion. "And whereas," he wrote, "of late I have bargained with one Dowland and divers other masons for the building and setting up of the Chapel of the Holy Trinity, within the town of Stratford-on-Avon aforesaid, and the tower of a steeple to the same, I will that the said masons sufficiently and ably do and finish the same with good and true workmanship, and they truly perform the same, making the said works as well of length, and breadth, and height, such as by the advice of mine executors, and other divers of the substantiallest and honest men of the same parish, shall and can be thought most convenient and necessary; and all the aforesaid works to be done by mine executors, and paid upon my proper goods and charges; and in like wise the covering and roofing of the same chapel with glazing, and all other furnishings thereunto necessary to it, to be paid by my said executors as the works aforesaid goeth forth." The furnishings included elaborate paintings on the roof, illustrating the history of the Holy Cross, which, although in mediæval times it was usually traced back to the creation of the world, was here connected with no more ancient personages than King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and thence brought by several stages to the time of St. Helena, the mother of Constantine, who made a successful pilgrimage to Palestine to discover its whereabouts in the fourth century. Other paintings commemorated St. Thomas à Becket, St. George and the Dragon, and the Last Judgment. In 1804, the paintings were discovered beneath a covering of whitewash, and they were copied and engraved, but they have since been more than once recoated with whitewash, and are probably wholly destroyed. Another of Sir Hugh Clopton's benefactions was of greater practical utility. The townspeople had long felt the need of a good bridge over the river, and "the great and sumptuous bridge upon the Avon, at the east end of the town," constructed of freestone, with fourteen arches, and "a long causeway" of stone, "well walled on each side at the west," was erected by Sir Hugh. Leland, the antiquary, who visited Stratford about 1530, on a tour through England, noted in his account of his journey the great value of this gift. "Afore the time of Hugh Clopton," he wrote, "there was but a poor bridge of timber, and no causeway to come to it, whereby many poor folks either refused

to come to Stratford when the river was up, or coming thither stood in jeopardy of life." The bridge required frequent repair, as we shall see, in Shakespeare's day, but enough of it is still standing to convince us of the workmanlike thoroughness with which its foundations were laid.

By Sir Hugh Clopton's will Stratford largely benefited in other ways. "He bequeathed also C marks to be given to xx poor maidens of good name and fame dwelling in Stratford, *i.e.*, to each of them five marks apiece at their marriage; and likewise C*l.* to the poor householders in Stratford; as also L*li.* to the new building the cross aisle in the Parish Church there" (Dugdale). The testator did not, at the same time, forget the needs of the poor of London, or their hospitals; and on behalf of poor scholars at the Universities, he established six exhibitions at Cambridge and Oxford of the annual value of £4 for five years.



STAIRCASE OF CLOPTON HOUSE.

## VIII.

*THE REFORMATION AT STRATFORD.*

IT was thus that the town was structurally completed, but its constitution was not permanently defined for some years later. The Reformation exerted a determining influence on the constitutional development of Stratford, and before it had run out its course, it had ultimately brought to fruition the townspeople's desire for local self-government. The new movement respected none of the old rights of ecclesiastics to property, and the claims of the Bishops of Worcester to Stratford were summarily set aside. About 1550, John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, one of Edward VI.'s Lord Protectors, and afterwards Duke of Northumberland, became Lord of the Manor of Stratford and of the neighbourhood, and the King added to this estate the Lordship, Manor and Castle of Kenilworth, which was not very far distant. When the Duke of Northumberland's ambitious plot to set his daughter-in-law Lady Jane Grey on the throne of England came to nought, and he paid the penalty of failure on the scaffold, Queen Mary humanely made Stratford over for a short while to his widowed duchess; but she finally assigned it to the Savoy Hospital beyond Temple Bar, which she had revived for the poor of London. Such changes in the ownership of the manor did not, however, very nearly affect the townsmen; for the manorial property had been diminished by gifts of the Bishops of Worcester to the guild, and the powers of the manorial lords lessened by the assumption of many of their ancient functions by the fraternity's wardens and aldermen.

More important to the townsmen were the laws of Henry VIII.'s reign, dealing with religious houses and corporations. The Acts for their dissolution immediately affected more than one institution at Stratford. The college—the home of the chantry priests—was the first to fall. In 1535, commissioners visited it, and found the warden, the five priests, and the four choristers living there sumptuously. Subsidiary chapels had been set up by the college in the neighbouring villages of Bishopston and Luddington, of which they owned the tithes. Its lands were under the supervision of a steward and a bailiff. The annual income was £128 9s. 1d. In 1545, another report was made, and it was noted that all its officers had, besides a good yearly stipend, two shillings weekly for their diet allowed out of the possessions of the said college. It was rich in silver and gold, and Henry VIII. appropriated, before the close of his reign, no less than 260 ounces of its plate. The priests were apparently permitted to reside within the college till 1547, when all college chantries and free chapels were finally suppressed. For four years the Stratford College seems to have been uninhabited. In 1551, it was made over as a royal gift to the Earl of Warwick, the new lord of the manor. He transformed it into a private residence; but his execution in 1553 brought the building again into the hands of the Crown. Elizabeth leased it in 1576 to a Richard Coningsby, and he it was who sublet it to wealthy John Combe, who lived there on good terms with Shakespeare, although he bore the reputation of being a "devilish usurer."

The guild underwent a far more striking transformation. The politicians who surrounded Henry VIII. and Edward VI. found the destruction of religious corporations not more satisfactory to their consciences than to their purses, and they were not willing to lightly surrender the work of hunting them down. The ancient religious guilds satisfied all the conditions of the chase, and in 1545 and in 1547 commissioners came to Stratford to report

upon the possessions and constitution of the Guild of the Holy Cross. The income was estimated at £50 1s. 11½*d.*, of which £21 6s. 8*d.* was paid as salary to four chaplains. There was a clerk, who received 4*s.* a year; and Oliver Baker, who saw to the clock (outside the chapel), received 13*s.* 4*d.* "Upon the premises was a free school, and William Dalam, the schoolmaster, had yearly for teaching, £10." "There is also given yearly," the report runs, "to xxiiij poor men, brethren of the said guild, lxiijs. iiij*d.*; vz., xs. to be bestowed in coals, and the rest given in ready money; besides one house there called the Almshouse; and besides v or vi*li.* given them of the good provision of the master of the same guild." In the report of 1547 the importance of the guild chapel to the town is strongly insisted



LUDDINGTON VILLAGE AND NEW CHURCH.

upon. It was more centrally situated than the parish church, since the town had long left the banks of the river, and the old and sick regularly attended service there. The chapel stood in the midst of the town, "for the great quietness and comfort of all the parishioners there; for that the parish church standeth out of the same town, distant from the most part of the said parish half a mile and more; and in time of sickness, as the plague and such like diseases doth chance within the said town, then all such infective persons, with many other impotent and poor people, doth to the said chapel resort for their daily service." But in 1547 all these advantages ceased: the guild was dissolved, and all the property came into the royal treasury. For six years the town ceased to have any responsible government.

## IX.

*THE GROWTH OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.*

**B**UT the inconvenience of anarchy, tempered by the administration of the stewards of the owners of the manor, was felt to be an unbearable humiliation. About 1550 the leading townsmen—the old officers of the guild—laid their grievances before the king, and begged him to rehabilitate the guild as a municipal corporation. The application was successful, and Edward VI.'s reply, dated 7th June, 1553, unreservedly placed the government of the borough in the hands of its own inhabitants.

"Whereas," the charter ran, "the borough of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, is an ancient borough, in which borough a certain guild was in former time founded and endowed with divers lands, tenements and possessions, from whose rents, revenues and profits a certain Grammar School was maintained and supported for the education and instruction of boys and youths, and a certain charitable house was there maintained and supported for the sustenance of twenty-four poor persons, and a certain great stone bridge called Stratford Bridge, placed and built over the water and river of the Avon beside the said borough, was from time to time maintained and repaired. And the lands, tenements and possessions of the same guild have come into our hands and now remain in our hands. And whereas the inhabitants of the borough of Stratford aforesaid from time beyond the memory of man have had and enjoyed divers franchises, liberties and free customs, jurisdictions, privileges, reversions and quittances by reason and pretext of charters, concessions and confirmations made in ancient time by our progenitors to the masters and brethren of the aforesaid guild and otherwise, which the same inhabitants of the same borough aforesaid are now very little able to have and enjoy, because the aforesaid guild is dissolved, and in consideration of other causes now apparent to us whence it appears likely that the borough aforesaid and the government thereof may go to a worse state from time to time, if a remedy be not quickly provided. On which grounds the inhabitants of the borough of Stratford aforesaid have humbly prayed us that we would accord them our favour and abundant grace, for the amelioration of the said borough and the government thereof, and for the support of the great works which they from time to time are compelled and ought to sustain and support, and that we would deign to make, reduce and create them the same inhabitants into a body corporate and politic."

And directions followed ordering this "reduction" and "creation" to proceed without delay.

Thus the ancient guild did not lie long in cold obstruction: by 1554 it entered on a new tenure of life. The names and functions of its chief officers were slightly changed, but the bailiff, chosen on the Wednesday next before the Nativity of our Lady (September 8th), was merely the old warden newly spelt. The aldermen bore the same titles as of old. The proctors were replaced by the chamberlains. The clerk's and beadle's offices underwent no reform. The common council continued to meet monthly in the guildhall or one of the adjoining chambers "at nine o'clock of the forenoon," summoned by the bell of the guild chapel; but it now included, besides the bailiff and ten aldermen, the ten chief or capital burgesses, and its edicts governed the whole town. Regular performance of duty was secured by fines of six-and-eightpence on all absentees from meetings of the council, and of ten pounds on any councillor declining to assume the office of bailiff when elected to it. Very heavy penalties (five pounds for a first offence, ten for a second, and "to be expelled" for ever for a third) punished those who discussed "forth of the council chamber" any of its proceedings. "In all and every general procession," every

councillor, according to "orders passed" in 1557, was to take part "in his honest apparel as in his gown"—a survival of the hood of the guild—on pain of a twelve-penny fine, and a like forfeiture awaited anyone who attended a "hall" without "his gown upon his back." The characteristic fraternal sentiment of the original institution was perpetuated in the orders "that none of the aldermen nor none of the capital burgesses, neither in the council chamber nor elsewhere, do revile one another, but brotherlike live together, and that after they be entered into the council chamber, that they nor none of them depart not forth but in brotherly love, under the pains of every offender to forfeit and pay for every default, vjs. viij*d*." Similarly, when any councillor or his wife died, all were to attend the funeral "in their honest apparel, and bring the corpse to the church, there to continue and abide devoutly until the corpse be buried."

The estates of the guild, to which the greater part of the college lands were added, became the corporate property, and the chattels of the guild—the vestments, armour, and plate—passed into the hands of the new body. The school, in which Edward VI. showed a special interest, became, with the chapel and almshouses, institutions of the borough. The vicar of the parish church was a corporate officer, with a salary of twenty pounds annually and two pounds in tithes. Several functions that the steward of the lord of the manor had performed were absorbed in the new régime, and several new legal and police offices were created. The bailiff was a duly-appointed magistrate. He attended the judges at the assizes, and presided, with his sergeants and constables, in a monthly court of record, for the recovery of small debts, and at the great law days or leets, to which all the inhabitants were summoned to revise and enforce against offenders the police regulations. The leets were held twice a year—on the Wednesdays after the feast of St. Michael the Archangel (September 29th) and after Low Sunday, *i.e.*, the week after Easter. (Kit Sly, talking in his sleep, promises to present the ale-wife of Wincot at the leet, "because she brought stone jugs and no seal'd quarts"; and Iago speaks in metaphor of keeping "leets and law-days.") The new corporation also assumed the duty of supervising the trade of the town. Under the shadow of the religious fraternity, we have watched the trading companies come into being, and the town council now kept them strictly under its own control. The bailiff confirmed indentures of apprenticeship, and the chamberlains demanded a fee on the admission of a new member into a craft or mystery. Prices of bread and beer were fixed by the corporation, and ale-tasters were annually appointed to enforce orders as to the quality and price of victuals. Searchers were also nominated to inspect the tanneries, and to prevent the common abuses in the preparation of leather which were prohibited by statutes of the realm in 1566 and 1603. But in spite of signs of expansion, the early history of the new municipality signally illustrates the continuity of the town's career.

It is essential for the student of the social history of Stratford to grasp clearly the leading differences between life in the sixteenth and in the nineteenth centuries, and of the first importance is it to realize how little personal liberty was understood in Elizabethan country towns. Scarcely an entry in the books of the new council fails to emphasize the extremest principles of paternal government. If a man lived immorally he was summoned to the guildhall, and rigorously examined as to the truth of the rumours that had reached the bailiff's ear. If his guilt was proved, and he refused to make adequate reparation, he was invited to leave the city without delay. A female servant, hired at a salary of twenty-six shillings and eightpence and a pair of shoes, left her master suddenly in 1611. The aldermen ordered her arrest on her master's complaint. Her defence was that "she was once frightened in the night in the chamber where her master's late wife died, but by what or when she cannot tell"; but this plea proved of no avail, and she spent some months in the gaol by the guildhall. Rude endeavours were made to sweeten the tempers of scolding wives. A substantial "cucking stool," with iron staples, lock, and hinges, was



kept in good repair. The shrew was attached to it, and by means of ropes, planks, and wheels, was plunged two or three times into the Avon whenever the municipal council believed her to stand in need of correction. Three days and three nights were invariably spent in the open stocks by any inhabitant who spoke disrespectfully to any town officer, or who disobeyed any municipal decree. No one might receive a stranger into his house without the bailiff's permission. No journeyman, apprentice, or servant might "be forth of their or his master's house" after nine o'clock at night. Bowling alleys and butts were provided by the council, but were only to be used at stated times. An alderman was fined on one occasion for going to bowls after a morning meeting of the council, and Henry Sydnall was fined twenty pence for keeping unlawful or unlicensed bowling in a back shed. Alehouse-keepers, of whom there were thirty in Stratford in Shakespeare's time, were kept strictly under the council's control. They were not allowed to brew their own ale, or to encourage tippling, or to serve poor artificers except at stated hours of the day, on pain of fine and imprisonment. Dogs were not to go about the streets unmuzzled. Every inhabitant had to go to church of a Sunday, and heavy penalties were levied on absentees. Early in the seventeenth century swearing was rigorously prohibited. Laws as to dress were regularly enforced. In 1577 there were many fines exacted for failure to wear the plain statute woollen caps on Sundays, to which Rosaline makes reference in "Love's Labour's Lost," and the regulation affected all inhabitants above six years of age. In 1604, "the greatest part" of the population were presented at a great leet, or law-day, "for wearing their apparel contrary to the statute." Nor would it be difficult to quote many other like proofs of the persistent strictness with which the new town council of Stratford, by the enforcement of its own orders and of the statutes of the realm, regulated the inhabitants' whole conduct of life.

## X.

*JOHN SHAKESPEARE IN MUNICIPAL OFFICE AND IN TRADE.*

IT was this sober form of government that demanded William Shakespeare's allegiance from youth to the close of his life, and in his later days there can be no doubt of his loyal conformity to all its precise edicts. It was of this government that his father, John Shakespeare, was an energetic member, filling all the chief offices, from ale-taster and constable to that of bailiff and chief alderman, between 1557 and 1577; and from his boyhood every detail of its organization must have been familiar to the poet. Before 1557, his father was, doubtless, a leading or "capital" burgess and a member of the town council. He was an ale-taster in 1557, and had to enforce the order "that all the brewers, that brew to sell either ale or beer, shall sell their ale or beer for threepence the gallon under the hairsieve (*i.e.* new), and threepence-halfpenny the gallon stale, and thirteen gallons to the dozen, and that no victualler and no alehouse-keeper shall sell any ale or beer contrary to this order; and that all bakers that bake bread to sell shall sell four (*i.e.*, quarter) loaves for a penny, two (*i.e.*, half) loaves for a penny, and one (*i.e.*, whole) loaf for a penny, and so to keep the assize (the testing of weights and measures) delivered every Thursday at night, upon pain of imprisonment." On September 30th, 1558, and again on October 6th, 1559, John Shakespeare was chosen one of the four constables, and had to direct the watch throughout the year, and, Dogberry-like, once every month, from Michaelmas to Candlemas or oftener, "as the case requireth it, to call to him certain of the council and some other honest men, and keep and have a privy watch for the good rule of the town." In 1559 and in 1561, he was one of the four "affeerors"—officers who assessed in the council's behalf the fines for minor offences, for which the statutes prescribed no express penalties. From 1561 to 1564 he was a chamberlain, and duly presented year by year the municipal accounts. On July 4th, 1565, he was appointed an alderman under interesting circumstances. He took the place of William Bott, a wealthy capitalist from Coventry, who relieved William Clopton, an heir of Sir Hugh, of some of his pecuniary difficulties by purchasing New Place of him in 1563. Bott was of a quarrelsome temper. He was evidently one of those self-sufficient nobodies whom William Shakespeare delighted to honour with his ridicule in characters like Bottom and Dogberry. In 1565, he brought an action against Richard Sponer, a poor painter, inhabiting a cottage in Chapel Lane, for stealing twelve pieces of squared timber from his garden, and at the same time he had a serious dispute with his fellow-councillors. He spoke evil words of Master Bailiff and others. He said that "there was never a honest man of the council," whereupon he "was sent for and did not come to his answer." On the contrary, he gave "such opprobrious words that he was not," in his fellow-councillors' opinion, "worthy henceforth to be of the council," and was consequently "expulsed, to be none of the company." It was Bott's disgrace that secured John Shakespeare his alderman's gown. Three years later, at Michaelmas, 1568, John rose higher and became bailiff, and on September 5th, 1571, he was chief alderman, a post which he retained till September 3rd of the following year. From that date he ceased to take an active part in municipal affairs. The duties of the aldermen could not be well performed by poor men. In 1563 and 1564, when John Shakespeare was chamberlain, he had been able to advance as much as £3 2s. 7½d. to the corporation, but as the century grew older his monetary

resources failed him. In 1564, when the plague raged at Stratford, he had liberally contributed to the funds raised by the aldermen in behalf of their poor and afflicted neighbours. In 1576 he paid twelpence towards the beadle's salary; but in 1578 he was unable to pay his share of the payments privately made by his fellow-councillors "towards the furniture of three pikemen, two billmen, and one archer," who were apparently sent by the corporation to attend a muster of the trained bands of the county. Nor was he at the same time able to give the small sum of fourpence for the relief of the poor. Failure to pay such pecuniary dues as these combined, with long-continued absence from the "halls," to cause the corporation, on September 6th, 1586, to deprive John Shakespeare of his alderman's gown. He thus retired from public life when his son William was twenty-two years of age, and in no position to give his father any kind of assistance.

John Shakespeare's assumption of municipal office would prove, in the absence of all other evidence, that he was engaged in trade in the town. The first bailiff whose name is recorded was a skinner, and all his successors, with rare exceptions, were engaged in commerce. When John Shakespeare was first proposed for that office, in 1567, the rival candidates were a butcher and a brewer. John Shakespeare's mercantile occupation has been a matter of endless controversy. It is certain that on June 17th, 1556, he sued, in the capacity of a glover, before John Burbage, the bailiff, one Thomas Siche, of Arscotte, Worcestershire, for a debt of eight pounds; and between 1565 and 1579, whenever he attached his mark to official documents (he could not write), he rudely drew the glover's trade-mark—an instrument resembling the stretcher still used by sellers of gloves. Twenty-three years later he was always described as a yeoman. But here is no real inconsistency. Stratford still retained many agricultural characteristics. Small farmers lived there in number, and, except those inhabitants exclusively engaged in some recognized urban manufacture, they dealt in all the products yielded by the cultivation of land and stock. Thus, in 1597, George Perry, of Stratford, was described as using, "besides his glover's trade, buying and selling of wool and corn, and making of malt," and Richard Castell, of Rother Market, as a glover, "while his wife uttereth weekly two strikes of malt." Joyce Hobday, a widow, was similarly selling at one time wool, calves' leather, and gloves. John Shakespeare's business was, doubtless, of even wider extent. He cultivated far more land than the majority of his neighbours. About 1557, he married Mary Arden, the youngest daughter of Robert Arden, of Wilmecote, his father's old landlord, and she had inherited from her father "all his land in Wilmecote called Ashbies, and the crop upon the ground, sown and tilled as it is," and was, with her sister Alice, his residuary legatee, which gave her arable and pasture land at the little village of Snitterfield. About 1570, John purchased a small farm called Ingon Meadow, containing fourteen acres, for eight pounds. The produce of these estates was, doubtless, sold by John Shakespeare at Stratford. As early as 1556, we find him complaining that his neighbour, Henry Fyld, unjustly detained barley belonging to him. In 1564 he sold timber to the corporation. Sheep, meat, skins, wool, and leather were among the commodities in which he dealt. That his business transactions were numerous is proved by the frequency of his suits for the recovery of debts in the local courts between 1557 and 1595. His failure after 1580 was probably due to some unfortunate speculation in corn, or to the recurrence of dearths, of which dealers were forbidden by statute law, strictly enforced by the town council, to take any commercial advantage.

## XI.

*THE STRATFORD INDUSTRIES AND POPULATION.*

OF the trades pursued by John Shakespeare's and his son's contemporaries, the extant descriptions of the various trading companies give us full information. "The weaver's art," as in the thirteenth century, held among them the first place. There were, besides, mysteries or crafts of skinners, tailors, shoemakers, saddlers, glovers, whittawers (*i.e.*, tanners of white leathers), and collarmakers; a company of chandlers, soapmakers, ironmongers, and bakers, survived beyond 1726. Pewterers, butchers, brewers, drapers, grocers, carpenters, and painters, were also numerous in the town. But although orders were frequently passed bidding no person set up any trade or occupation "before he be made free of its company," and enjoining on everyone the necessity of "sorting himself into one company or another," the shopkeepers appear to have contrived to follow more than one trade. Thus, we find Adrian Quiney, a prominent mercer of Stratford, dealing, with his wife, in such various commodities as ginger, red lead, Southwich cloth, lime, salad oil, and deal boards. Quiney owned a house in Henley Street, and was bailiff in 1572; his grandson Richard was an intimate friend of the poet, and his great-grandson Thomas married Judith Shakespeare, the poet's younger daughter, just before her father's death in 1616. Among the chief shoemakers of the town was a namesake of John Shakespeare, possibly a cousin, living in 1590 in Bridge Street. He filled municipal office as constable and ale-taster in 1585. He was, in 1587, in pecuniary difficulties, and received a loan of £5 from the corporation out of Oken's Charity—a fund bequeathed to the town by Thomas Oken, of Warwick, in 1570, for the relief of poor tradesmen. He was master of the company of shoemakers in 1585, and soon afterwards appears to have left Stratford. Certain regulations like those enforced upon bakers and brewers by the ale-tasters, or those enforced by the tannery searchers, hampered what is now understood to be the freedom of trade. There were customs of stretching and straining cloths, and of chalking and "otherwise deceitfully making them," which were frequently prohibited under rigorous penalties. Leather was often imperfectly tanned and made hollow by divers mixtures, such as obnoxious fats, so that "boots within two or three days' wearing will straightway become brown as a hare-back; and, which is more, fleet and run about like a dishclout; and, which is most of all, hold out no water or very little." Horse-hide was often sold for ox-hide. Corn dealers were ordered, under heavy penalties, in 1596, not to "ingross, forestall, or regrate," but "to furnish the market rateably and weekly" with fixed quantities. But many of these prohibitions alone affected disastrously dishonest traders.

Trade was maintained at a normal rate of briskness by the weekly markets and the biennial fairs, the chief of which fell in September. The town council strictly regulated the procedure of the fairs, and appointed to each trade a station in the streets. Thus, raw hides at markets and fairs were to be laid down at the cross in Rother Market. Sellers of butter, cheese, and all manner of white meat, and wick-yarn and fruits were to set up their stalls by the cross at the chapel. A site in the High Street was assigned to country butchers, who repaired to the town with their flesh, hides, and tallow. Pewterers were ordered to "pitch" their wares in Wood Street, and to pay for the ground they occupied fourpence a yard. Saltwains, whose owners did a thriving trade in days when salted meats formed the staple supply of food, were permitted to stand about the cross in Rother Market. At various points the victuallers were permitted to erect booths.

These regulations were needful to prevent strife, and fines for breach of the rules often reached as large a sum as five pounds. The townsmen were anxious to secure for themselves all the advantages of these gatherings, and the council often employed men armed with cudgels to keep Coventry traders out of the town.

These details, which are drawn from the council books of the Stratford Corporation from 1557 to 1607, indicate much commercial activity. For a country town, we may judge Stratford to have been fairly populous. We know that the Commissioners appointed to report on the guild in 1547, stated the chapel to be the chief place of worship for fifteen hundred "houseling people," *i.e.*, persons accustomed to take the holy sacrament. In 1562, there appeared to have been about thirty householders in each of the twelve streets of the town, which would roughly show a population of two thousand persons. Plagues, like the disastrous one of 1564, were continually reducing the population, but new arrivals from the neighbouring villages appear to have maintained it at a fairly steady average. Small farmers were finding agriculture growing year by year less profitable: the great city merchants had long been buying up arable to transform it into pasture-land for purely commercial objects. Agricultural labourers, therefore, found their services at a discount, and flocked to the towns. The yeomen, too, found it to their advantage to move into towns, where their produce could readily find purchasers. Stratford, we have seen, attracted a rich man like William Bott from Coventry, about 1560. Some years before it had attracted from a neighbouring village John Shakespeare himself.

## XII.

*JOHN SHAKESPEARE'S FIRST SETTLEMENT IN STRATFORD.  
THE STREETS.*

IT was, in all probability, in 1551, just before the borough had reached the all-important stage of incorporation, that John Shakespeare first came to Stratford. In the middle ages there were no Shakespeares at Stratford. But in its surrounding districts, families of the name were numerous. Thus, among the members of a guild—which closely resembled the Stratford guild—at Knoll, near Hampton-in-Arden, Shakespeares, Shaxpers, Shakespeyres, Shakspeeres, called Richard, John, William, Agnes, Isabella, occur repeatedly between



SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE BEFORE RESTORATION.

1464 and 1555. Some of these lived at Rowington, and can be traced there till the close of the last century: one Thomas Shakespeare, of Rowington, was a disciple of Jack Cade. A family of Shakespeares also lived at Warwick till the close of the sixteenth century, and on 16th June, 1579, William, one of these, according to the register in the church of St. Nicholas, Warwick, met his death by drowning in the river Avon. (How invaluable might this piece of evidence prove to the monomaniacs who believe that Bacon wrote Will Shakespeare's plays!) But the poet, although doubtless collaterally related to many of these families, was directly descended from none of them. John Shakespeare probably belonged to a branch residing in the sixteenth century at Snitterfield, a little village four miles to the north of Stratford, and the Richard Shakespeare who was a farmer, renting there of Robert Arden, of Wilmecote, a small tenement, with a little land attached to it, in 1550, was doubtless

John's father, and *the* William's grandfather. Snitfield, or Snitterfield, had seen days of commercial prosperity, but it was at this time chiefly occupied by small farmers and their labourers. It had a church at the time of the Norman Conquest, and in 1242 a market and a fair had been granted it. As a manor it had successively belonged to a monastery of Bordsley and to many Earls of Warwick, and it came, in the sixteenth century, into the hands of John Hales, the founder of a free school at Coventry—a very wealthy man, whose lameness, the result of an accident, gained for him the sobriquet of

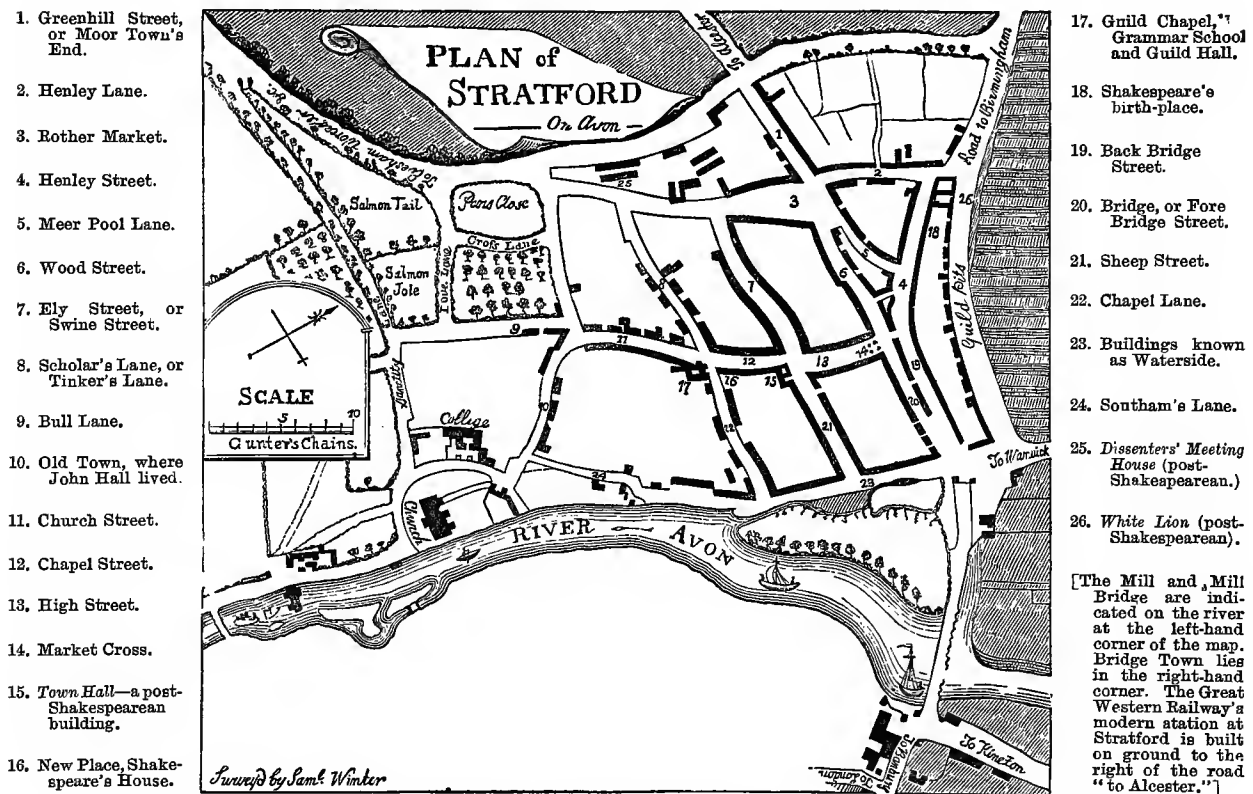


THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF STRATFORD, FROM SPEED'S MAP OF WARWICKSHIRE, 1610.

"Hales with the club foot." In 1552, John Shakespeare was living in Henley Street, Stratford, but it was not until 1556 that he purchased houses in the town. In that year he entered into copyhold possession of a tenement with a garden and croft (*i.e.*, an enclosed plot of land), in Greenhill Street, at a rental of sixpence, and of a house and garden in Henley Street. But these dwellings he apparently let again, and continued to reside in the house he had first occupied. This tenement he bought, with its gardens, orchards, and the house adjoining, which had been previously in his occupation for business purposes,

for forty pounds, in 1575. It was in an upper story of the former of these houses that his son William was born in 1564, probably on 22nd April. It is of interest to note that the nearest neighbours of John Shakespeare were on one side John Wheler, and on the other, before 1591, George Badger, a draper, who was once constable of the town. It was, doubtless, among their children that William Shakespeare found his earliest playfellows.

It may be well to follow John Shakespeare from his first entrance into the town, and take a survey of it in his company. We shall thus gain some knowledge of that aspect of it with which his son William was familiar in his youth. John Shakespeare would have originally entered Stratford by the Warwick Road, near which Snitterfield lies, and would have found himself on arrival at the bottom of Bridge Street, by the causeway leading to the stone bridge. Leland, the antiquarian traveller of 1530, said of the general appearance presented by Stratford to a stranger, "it hath two or three long streets, besides back lanes.



GROUND PLAN OF STRATFORD-ON-AVON, MADE IN 1759, AND INDICATING ALL THE FEATURES FAMILIAR TO THE SHAKESPEARES.

(Reproduced, by kind permission of Mr. J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps, from his "History of New Place.")

One of the principal streets leadeth from east to west, and another from north to south. . . . The town is reasonable well builded of timber." Passing up Bridge Street, which led on from east to west, the new comer came upon a small row of shops and stalls in the centre of the road, known as Middle Row, of which the south side was Bridge Street, and the north, Back Bridge Street. It was in Bridge Street, it will be remembered, that John Shakespeare, the shoemaker, had his stall. The row was pulled down, less than a century ago, to form the wide thoroughfare of modern Bridge Street. In Bridge Street stood the three chief inns of the town—the Swan, the Bear, and the Crown, of which the latter is believed to have occupied the site of the present Red Horse Hotel; and for many years a large house there, known as the Cage, and probably at one time the prison, was in the occupation of Henry Smith, a vintner. When the top of Bridge Street was reached,



it divided into two roads—Wood Street to the left and Henley Street to the right—and the latter soon led into the country. Wood Street ran on into Greenhill Street, afterwards Moor Town's End, which, though still retaining a rural hedge, was fringed with a few houses. Behind Henley Street lay gravel-pits belonging to the guild, which were largely used in the repair of the bridge, and in rare paving operations in the town; but no inhabitant was allowed to help himself there. At right angles to the west end of Wood Street was Rother Market, where a stone cross stood, and the borough's weekly cattle market was held, and thence lanes led to Evesham. The chief or market cross of the town was at the west end of Bridge Street, at the corner of High Street, which ran parallel to Rother Market. It was a stone monument covered by a low tiled shed, round which forms were placed for the accommodation of listeners to the sermons, which, as at St. Paul's Cross, London, were occasionally delivered there. At a later date a room was placed above it, and a clock above that. The open space about it formed the chief market-place of the town, and its site is now occupied by a house known as the Market-house. Near it seems to have stood a pump, at which the housewives were frequently to be seen "washing of clothes," and hanging them up on the cross to dry, or the butchers might be detected hanging meat there; but these practices were disapproved of by the corporation, and finally forbidden in 1608. The stocks, pillory, and whipping-post were set up near the cross.

From the high or market cross, the street that ran in a south-westerly direction introduced the visitor to the most substantial buildings of the town, and from the householders there the bailiff was usually chosen. In other parts of Stratford most of the houses were detached; here there were a few vacant spaces, but the houses mostly adjoined each other. The first portion was the High Street, and mainly consisted of shops. The second portion was Chapel Street, and among the large private houses there stood New Place, which in 1597 became William Shakespeare's property. The lower end of the street was known as Church Street, and at the corner, facing New Place, was the chapel of the guild, succeeded by the school, guildhall, gaol, and almshouses. Above the chapel-porch was a third cross, and near at hand a second pump, which was removed by the council's order in 1595, and its site filled with gravel and other rubbish. Turning to the left at the end of the street, Old Town was reached, where gardens and unoccupied land surrounded several large houses, and John Hall, one of the poet's sons-in-law, had a residence there early in the seventeenth century. This road ultimately led to the churchyard and to the parish church, by the banks of the river, "a fair large piece of work," as Leland describes it, ". . . at the south end of the town." Over against the church was the stately residence of the Combes, formerly the College of Stratford, and but a little way down the road that ran between its grounds and the cemetery were the river-mill and the mill-bridge, which was not pulled down till late in the present century. By the river, near the church, doubtless stood the cucking-stool for the scolding wives, and a field belonging to the town in the neighbourhood was known as the bank-croft, or bancroft, where drovers and farmers of the town were allowed to take their cattle to pasture for an hour a day. "All horses, geldings, mares, swine, geese, ducks, and other cattle," found there contrary to this regulation were impounded by the beadle in the pinfold, which was doubtless situated near at hand. The back lanes of which Leland wrote stretched from Rother Market to the river, and intersected High Street and its continuations. The chief of them was Ely Street, or Swine Street, joining High Street at its junction with Chapel Street, and running to the Avon as Sheep, or Ship, Street. Parallel with these roads were Scholar's Lane, or Tinker's Lane, crossing Chapel Street by New Place, and thence to the river bearing the name of Chapel Lane, or Dead Lane, or Walker Street. In both Tinker's and Chapel lanes were gravel pits, digging in which was strictly forbidden within eight feet of the road. Many cottages in the smaller thoroughfares did service as alehouses.

## XIII.

*THE CONSTRUCTION AND FURNITURE OF THE HOUSES.  
THE GARDENS.*

THE visitor to modern Stratford will learn from this account of the streets of the town in the sixteenth century how kindly time has dealt with their names. Nor of the outward appearances of the houses in Shakespeare's day will his own observation fail to give him a good conception. The majority of them, two storeys high, were constructed of timber beams, set crosswise far apart, with the panels or interstices of lath and plaster. The roofs were usually of thatch, with dormer windows nestling there when the front wall did not rise into steep gables. Porches shaded the door; often a narrow, slanting, tiled or wooden roof, ran along the house front over the window on the ground floor, and beneath this kind of shed, called a pentice or penthouse, the smaller traders frequently set a stall for their goods. The better houses in High Street and Chapel Street, like New Place, were of timber and brick, instead of plaster, and Shakespeare appears to have rebuilt the greater part of his residence with stone, of which the College was wholly constructed. Tiled roofs were characteristic of such buildings, but at times an owner of conservative tendencies would insist on the superiority of thatch, like Walter Roche, who moved into a house in Chapel Street in 1582, and replaced the tiles with thatch. Occasionally the woodwork in the front of the houses, as in the surviving example in High Street, built in 1596, was carefully carved with *fleurs de lis* and interlacing designs, and the oriel windows and overhanging beams supported by carved brackets. Chapel Lane, one of the streets well within the town, and others in its outlying districts, like the rural parts of Henley and Greenhill streets, were chiefly occupied by barns, where the grain from the neighbouring country, largely cultivated by the townsmen, was stored. These were constructed like the smaller dwelling-houses—of timber, lath, and plaster, and were invariably thatched. The gardens of the houses were separated from each other by mud walls. They were of clay, road-sand, or mud, and usually thatched at the top. In constant need of repair, they formed little protection against robbers, who often forced their way through them. The land about the houses was very generally planted with fruit-trees, and the orchard about the guild buildings was famed for its plums and apples. The garden of New Place was long famed for its mulberries. Pleasure gardens were an exclusive characteristic of the great manor houses in the surrounding country, but it is certain that flowers and a few cooking and medicinal plants were cultivated in the small plots in the town, and it is quite possible that more ambitious attempts at horticulture were made in the exceptionally large gardens of New Place and the College. Elm-trees were a very common feature of the Stratford gardens. In 1582, it was reported to the council that of four backyards in Dead or Chapel Lane—the street where the barns predominated—there were eleven elms and one ash-tree growing in one of them, twenty-six elms in another, one in the third, and four in the fourth. Several gardens in Henley Street could boast of at least four elms, and elm-trees marking the borough's boundaries on the Birmingham and Evesham roads were surveyed with much ceremony in Rogation Week year after year by the town officers. Thus the town was well shaded in summer, and he who would learn the rudiments of forestry had little need to go far afield. Shakespeare frequently indicates a significant familiarity with the

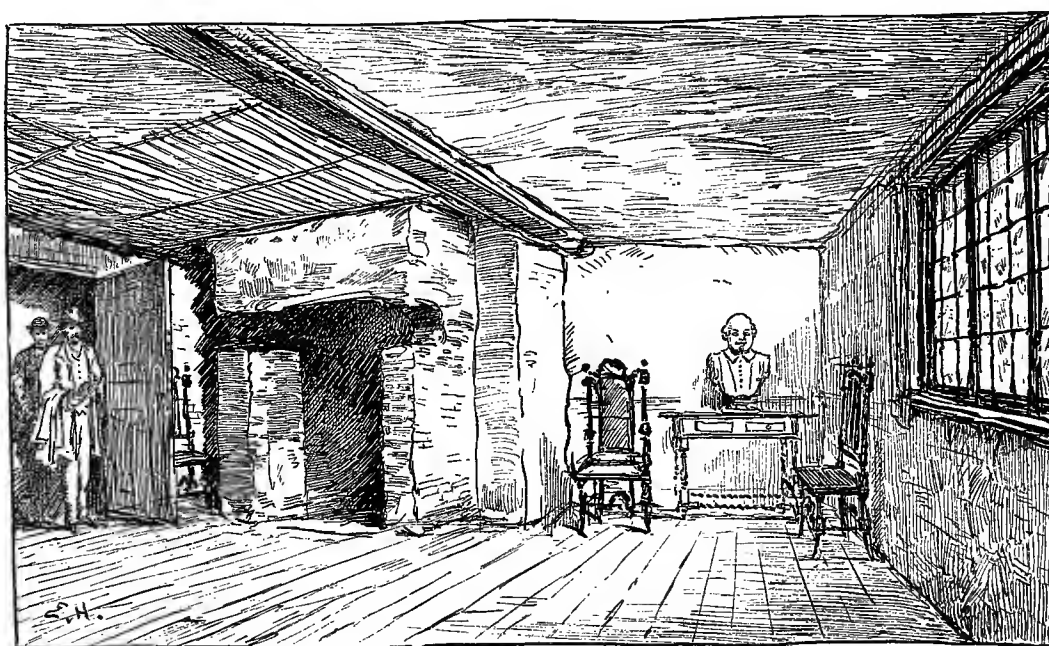
pruning of trees and the simpler operations of horticulture. His gardener in "Richard II." has no dilettante acquaintance with the method of cutting off "the heads of too fast-growing sprays," or of rooting away

"The noisome weeds, that without profit suck  
The soil's fertility from wholesome flowers."

At the proper season he wounds

"The bark, the skin of our fruit-trees ;  
Lest, being over-proud with sap and blood,  
With too much riches it confound itself."

Others of Shakespeare's characters give very adequate explanation of the gardener's hatred of weeds, of "hateful dock, rough thistles, kexies, burs," of "tooth'd briars, sharp furzes,



THE ROOM IN WHICH SHAKESPEARE WAS BORN.

pricking gorse and thorns:" they well knew the evil work wrought by "envious worms and caterpillars," and were not ignorant of the uses of manure for those roots

"That shall first spring and be most delicate."

Iago's specious philosophy finds its most vigorous expression in his comparison of "our bodies" to "our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners," where we may "plant nettles or sow lettuce; set hyssop and weed up thyme; supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many." This practical knowledge was doubtless acquired while the poet was working with his father in the garden or orchard about his home in Henley Street, and was probably developed later in the "great garden" about his own residence in Chapel Street.

The interior of the Elizabethan houses of Stratford had little of what we understand by comfort. In the smaller houses for a long period chimneys were rare. A mere hole in the wall allowed the smoke to escape. In many cases the internal space was not partitioned off. The ground floor formed a single "hall," and "each one made his fire against a reredos in the hall, where he dined and dressed his meat." In the case of the larger houses, the hall was likewise the chief apartment, and a single loft above, sometimes divided, formed the only

sleeping room, but there was usually a parlour and another chamber cut off from the hall and cellars and outhouses devoted to the buttery. A change for the better came over Stratford in the matter of chimneys towards the close of the century. They were added to many of the little tenements of Middle Row, and John Shakespeare's house in Henley Street could certainly boast of one of them. A chimney was constructed for the kitchen at the guild chambers, and in 1582 an order was passed by the town council that "Walter Hill, dwelling in Rother Market, and all the other inhabitants of the borough, shall, before St. James' Day, April 30th, make sufficient chimneys," under pain of a fine of ten shillings. To the absence of chimneys the continual recurrence of severe fires at Stratford in the sixteenth century was mainly due.

Of the furniture of such a house as that in which the poet was born in Henley Street, we can obtain an adequate account from an inventory made in 1592, on the



THE UPPER STORY OF SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE.

(From a Drawing in the Possession of F. W. COSENS, Esq.)

death of Henry Field, tanner, a near neighbour of John Shakespeare. John Shakespeare was his chief executor. In the hall there was "one table upon a joined frame, five small joint stools, a small chair, a wainscot bench, and painted cloths," *i.e.*, hangings of cloth or canvas painted in oil. There was evidently a stove there, doubtless the only one in the house, for one pair of andirons, a fire shovel, a pair of tongs, two pairs of pothooks, and one pair of pothangers are among the furnishings. In the parlour, the sitting-room by day and bedroom apparently by night, was one small table upon a frame, two joint stools, two chairs, one press, one joined bed, and a small plank. "Item, three painted cloths, one feather bed, one flock bed, two bolsters, one pillow, one bed covering of yellow and green, four old blankets, and one old carpet." A long chest in the room contained five pairs of coarse sheets, three coarse table cloths, seven coarse wipers (*i.e.*, dusters), three coarse table napkins. In a shorter coffer were three pairs of flaxen sheets, one pair of hempen sheets, one flaxen table cloth, and one other of hemp, half a dozen table napkins of flax and one of hemp, two diaper napkins, and four pillow cases of flax. In the buttery were six dishes, eight platters, thirteen saucers, three porridge dishes, four salt cellars, five candlesticks, one quart pot, a pint pot, and two flower pots. These articles were all of pewter. Of brass there were three pots, a little pan,

six skimmers, a basin, one chaffing dish, a frying pan, and a dripping pan. There were also in the buttery four spits, great and small, and a pair of cupboards. In the chamber next the parlour were a truckle bed with a flock bed, an old coverlet, an old bolster, an old blanket, a little round table, and two old chests. In a little room adjoining were more beds, coffers, and a press of boards with shelves. In the kitchen house were six barrels of beer, five looms, four pails, four forms, three stools, one bolting hutch, two "skips" for taking up yeast, one vat, a table board, two pairs of trestles, and two strikes (*i.e.*, bushel measures), besides an axe, shovels, and spade. In an upper chamber were more beds and bedding, a cheese-crate, malt, malt shovels, a beam with scales, two dozen trenchers, and one dozen pewter spoons. In the yard were bundles of laths, loads of wood, buckets, cord, and windlass for the well, and a watchman's bill. Another house, the property of a wooldriver, also inventoried by John Shakespeare, contained a similar array of tables, chairs, beds, bedding, painted cloths, and brass and pewter implements. There were also three green cushions for a window seat, a curtain for the window, and pots of earth and glass. The presence of brewing utensils and looms in both instances show that it was customary to brew ale and weave wool at home. It is noticeable how the furnitures of the sleeping rooms and sitting rooms encroached upon one another. The cooking was chiefly done in the hall, upon which the front door opened; and there the pothooks and hangers were always kept. The painted cloths, or arras, were a feature common to all the Elizabethan houses. They were nailed on the walls of the guildhall, and even in the smaller cottages they were met with, bearing in all cases "wise sayings painted upon them," and frequently rough representations of Bible stories, especially of Dives and Lazarus and of "the pamper'd Prodigal." Shakespeare writes of these hangings in "Lucrece":—

"Who fears a sentence, or an old man's saw,  
Shall by a painted cloth be kept in awe."

Orlando taunts Jaques with having studied his cynical questions from "right painted cloth." Every bed-chamber had two classes of beds—the joined or standing bed, and the truckle bed, which could be rolled up by day. "There is his chamber," says mine host of the Garter to Simple, pointing to Falstaff's bedroom, "his standing bed and truckle bed." The bed coverings, or counterpanes—there was one of yellow and green belonging to Henry Field—were often richly embroidered, like those in Gremio's city house. The tables, as a rule, were made with flaps, to "turn up." Capulet, when he wants room for the dancers in his hall, shouts out to his servants to "turn the tables up." The carpet owned by Henry Field was doubtless to cover the table, not to lie beneath it. Grumio, Petruchio's servant, sees "the carpets laid" for supper on the return home of his master and new mistress. The floors were strewn with rushes, or occasionally with sweet-smelling herbs. A Dutch physician, visiting London in 1560, notes how "the chambers and parlours strewn over with sweet herbs refreshed me." Grumio bids the rushes be strewn in Petruchio's house; and Romeo bids wantons, light of heart,

"Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels."

Shakespeare, like his own Gremio, clearly took careful notice of the

"Pewter and brass, and all things that belong  
To house, or housekeeping."

## XIV.

*THE SANITARY CONDITION OF THE TOWN.*

SANITARY arrangements within the house were obviously not much heeded. The clay floors attracted all manner of nameless refuse, and were rarely swept. The well in the garden and the town pump might have formed an adequate water supply; but the uses of water were not generally known. The mud walls between the gardens were not conducive to cleanliness. Very few of the ordinary laws of health were, in fact, observed by the householders; and the corporation made very feeble attempts to enforce such of them as, when neglected,



OLD HOUSES IN ROTHER STREET.

created very obvious nuisances. Frequent penalties were imposed on those who failed to scour and clean the gutters and ditches before their residences. But the difficulty of disposing of household refuse was very commonly met by "laying it in the streets and lanes," or in these ditches and gutters. John Shakespeare appears to have been an habitual offender in this respect. His name first appears in any record of the municipality as owing a fine of twelvepence for having made a dirt heap with his neighbours Adrian Quiney and Henry Reynolds in Henley Street, and six years later he "stood amerced" in fourpence for failing to keep his gutter clean. In 1563, and subsequent years, the exposure of domestic rubbish in the street rendered the offender liable to a forfeit of three shillings and fourpence, and "the tenant that renteth the ground" upon which the muckhill stood, to one of ten shillings. Six places in the town were appointed for the amassing of the filth in legalized "muckhills." One stood in Ship Street, another in Scholar's Lane, a third in Henley Street, but the chief was in Chapel Lane. They were, in almost all cases, at the rural end of the smaller streets; but as they were to be removed only "twice a year—that is to say, before

the feast of Pentecost, and near about Michaelmas," they were always near enough to human habitations to make them a constant source of danger to health and life. Butchers, it is true, were forbidden to use them, and were ordered, under a penalty of twenty shillings, to take their garbage out of the town at nine o'clock each evening. Chapel Lane, which ran by the side of New Place, was the filthiest part of the town. The small cottagers there habitually neglected the council's orders, and dispersed refuse in the open road, until it often became impassable. John Sadler, a miller, insisted on winnowing his peas there, and leaving the chaff about. But this was a very innocent offence. Most of his neighbours kept pigs who, in spite of repeatedly published prohibitions, were allowed to wander at their own sweet wills. If a pigscote or pigsty was built, it was on the lane's pathway, and fines could not break the householders of the practice. John Rogers, the vicar of Stratford, living by the guild chapel, in 1613 was remonstrated with by the council for an offence of this kind, and his irrelevant defence was to the effect that "about my house there is no place of convenience without much annoyance to the chapel," which was next door, and "how far," he proceeded, "the breeding of such creatures is needful to poor housekeepers, I refer myself to those that can equal my charge," *i.e.*, have as many expenses as I. The town council issued an order, in 1611, "that no swine be permitted to be in the open street of this town unless they have a keeper with them, and then only while they are in driving within this borough, upon pain for every strayer of fourpence." But this produced little effect. Every time Shakespeare left his house in New Place (for the doorway was in Chapel Lane), he crossed the most noisome thoroughfare in the town; and Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps' suggestion that his death in 1616, like that of many of his townsmen, was due to the tainted atmosphere of his environment, seems only too probable. And Stratford saw no rapid improvement in the matter. Garrick described the town in 1769 as "the most dirty, unseemly, ill-pav'd, wretched-looking town in all Britain." Paternal as was the tone of the town council in the performance of most of its duties, it never supplemented the householder's neglect of cleanliness by any really adequate provisions. It delegated the duty of keeping the streets clean to the townsfolk, and as they failed to perform this function the streets remained dirty. It alone undertook the cleansing of the bridge, the market-place, and the space before the chapel door and guildhall; but in these days of the glorification of hygiene, there is a ludicrous ring about all the details of the arrangements made for this object. For the sweeping of the market-place, in Shakespeare's day, a widow named Baker was employed at a yearly salary of six shillings and eightpence, and she was provided, at the municipal expense, with a shovel, a broomstick, and twigs of trees. The duty of sweeping the bridge was entrusted to a man named Raven, who at times secured the additional services of the widow Baker. The chapel was rarely defiled by water; but on the occasion of the repair of its roof in 1604, Anthony Rees and his wife and goodwife Wilson were directed to sweep away the cobwebs and to wash the seats. Fresh rushes were occasionally laid in the council chamber and guildhall; and the floor of the latter was renewed at intervals with clay.

There was little pavement about the town. The market-place, in fact, alone was paved. But the bridge and the causeway were kept in fair order by the liberal sprinkling of gravel from the guild pits. In other parts of the town "logs and blocks" lay about the roadways, "to the nuisance of the king's liege people." Arrangements were made for a short time in winter for the lighting of the town. In 1557 it was ordained that every alderman and "capital" burgess, "between 15th December and twenty days after Christmas, from five to eight o'clock in the evening, have a lanthorn hanging in the street before his door, and there a candle burning to give light," under pain to forfeit twelpence in default. In 1617 the dates ran from November 1st to February 2nd.



## XV.

*PLAGUES, FIRES, FLOODS, AND FAMINES.*

THE whole town had to pay heavy penalties of disease for its indifference to sanitary precautions. The plague, a scourge of Christendom, whose horrors are barely paralleled by the fatal progresses now made from time to time in Europe by the Asiatic cholera, paid Stratford repeated visits. Few decades passed without its appearance among the townspeople. The infection rapidly passed from house to house, with its burning fevers and icy shiverings, its cureless pains and fatal languors. No remedy was known to produce much effect on the course



THE HOUSE OF DR. JOHN HALL.

of the disease. Bleedings and draughts of the plague-water were of no avail. Sorrel-water and verjuice, with oranges and lemons, allayed for a time the patient's thirst, and he was advised to take often, and in small quantities, light food like rabbit or chicken. Cleanliness was enjoined, with rare success, to prevent the spread of the contagion. Windows were to be kept open, and hung with green boughs of oak and willow; the floors to be strewn with sorrel, lettuce, roses, and oak-leaves, or with vinegar and rose-water; sandalwood and musk, aloes, amber, and cinnamon, were to burn about the houses six hours a day. The lighting of fires of rosemary and bay was the sole precaution habitually taken in small cottages at these troublous times (see Froude's History, vii., 74-5). The claims of death rarely remained unsatisfied; high and low fell before the pestilence; and graves in the churchyards stood always open to receive new dwellers, as soon as they had yielded their last breath. The most fearful epidemic that Stratford knew came in the summer of 1564, when William Shakespeare was



two or three months' old. One-seventh of the inhabitants of Stratford was swept away and consigned to the cemetery on the banks of the Avon. John Shakespeare's house was happily spared, and he did his duty to his poor neighbours. The town council feared to meet in their chamber, but frequently assembled in the garden adjoining to discuss measures for the relief of the poor. Many twelvepences John Shakespeare and his fellow-councillors bestowed on "those that be visited" between August and October of the fatal year. Of the terrors of the day, one tradition preserves a vivid picture. Clopton Manor-house was attacked. Charlotte Clopton, a young girl of the family, whose portrait shows fair blue eyes and pale golden hair falling in wavy ringlets on her neck, sickened of the disease, and, to all appearance, died. The body was hurried into the family tomb beneath Stratford Church. Before a week had passed another of the house followed her, and was borne to the same vault. And there the bearers saw, by their torches, on the steps leading from the church to the sepulchral chamber, Charlotte Clopton, in her grave-cloths, leaning against the wall. She was dead then, but it was clear that the plague had spared her: after she had been laid in the gloomy vault there had been a terrible struggle for life. Juliet's fears had a very real justification. Charlotte Clopton had been stifled in the vault,

"To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,  
And there died strangled ere [assistance] came."

Perhaps she had awoke

"Early—what with loathsome smells,  
And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth,  
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad:"

and had, as Juliet foretold, become distraught,

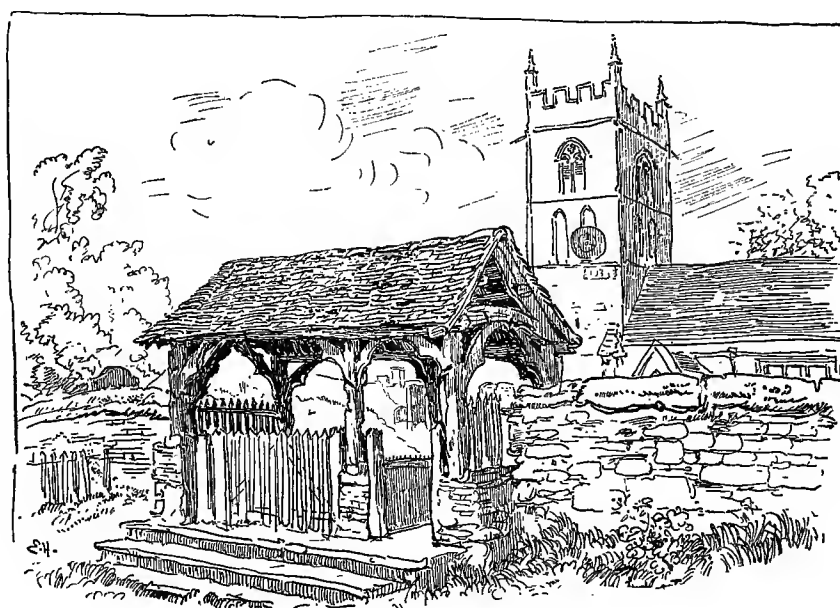
"Environed with all these hideous fears."

Fire was another danger to life and property with which the municipal council failed to deal adequately. Towards the close of the century, in 1598, two severe fires visited the town, and so many houses were reported to be "decayed with fire," that a special exemption from the national subsidies was granted the inhabitants. Barns seemed to have suffered repeatedly. The council, by its order of 1582, bidding all householders to erect chimneys for their houses, attempted to stem the fiery tide. They purchased five hooks as early as 1576 for pulling down threatened buildings, and one seems to have always been hung at the entrance to the guildhall. A wise precaution was contained in an edict enjoining on every burgess the necessity of having one leathern bucket, to be used in case of fire, and on every alderman that of having two. But, none the less, the town continued to suffer, and parts of Henley Street seem often to have been aflame.

A third danger to Stratford was less preventible. The Avon, as it still continues to do, often flooded its banks, and it did no little injury from time to time to the bridge. Stone to fill a hole in the bridge was a frequent item of expenditure in the town's accounts. In 1598, William Shakespeare, probably engaged in restoring New Place, sold for that purpose one load of stone to the corporation for tenpence. A very disastrous flood visited Stratford in 1588, and in the parish register of the neighbouring village of Welford, a picturesque account may be found of its coming.

"On the 18th day of July, 1588," runs the register, "in morning, there happened about eight of the clock, in Avon, such a sudden flood, as carried away all the hay about Avon. Old Father Porter, buried about four years past, being then a hundred and nine years of age, never knew it so high by a yard and a half. Dwelling in the mill-house, he, in former times, knew it under his bed, but this flood was a yard and a half in the house, and came in so suddenly that John Perry's wife was so amazed that she sate still till she was almost drowned, and was well nigh beside herself, and so far amiss that she did not know her own child when it was brought into her. It brake down Grange Mill; the crack thereof

was heard at Holditch. It brake up sundry houses in Warwick town, and carried away their bread, beef, cheese, butter, pots, pans, and provisions, and took away ten carts out of one town, and three wains, with the furniture of Mr. Thomas Lucy, and broke both ends of Stratford Bridge. That [flood] drowned three furlongs of corn in Thetford field. It was so high at the height that it unthatched the mill, and stocked up a number of willows and salnows, and did take away one [of] Sales's daughters of Grafton, out of Hillborough meadow, removing of the hay-cock, that she had no shift but to get upon the top of a hay-cock, and was carried thereupon by the water a quarter of a mile well nigh, till she came to the very last bank of the stream, and there was taken into a boat, and all was like to be drowned, but that another boat coming rescued them soon. Three men going over Stratford Bridge, when they came to the middle of the bridge they could not go forward, and then returning presently, could not get back, for the water was so risen; it rose a yard every hour from eight to four, that it came into the parsonage of Welford Orchard, and filled the fish-pool, and took away the sign-post at the Bear; it carried away Edward Butler's cart, which was soon beneath Bidford, and it came into the vicarage of Weston, and made Adam Sandars thence remove, and took away half a hundred pounds of hay."



OLD LYCH-GATE AT WELFORD.

So quaint a list of disasters well illustrates Shakespeare's own account, in "Midsummer Night's Dream," of how the winds—

"Falling in the land,  
Have every pelting river made so proud,  
That they have overborne their continents:  
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,  
The ploughman lost his sweat; and the green corn  
Hath rotted, ere his youth attained a beard. . . ."

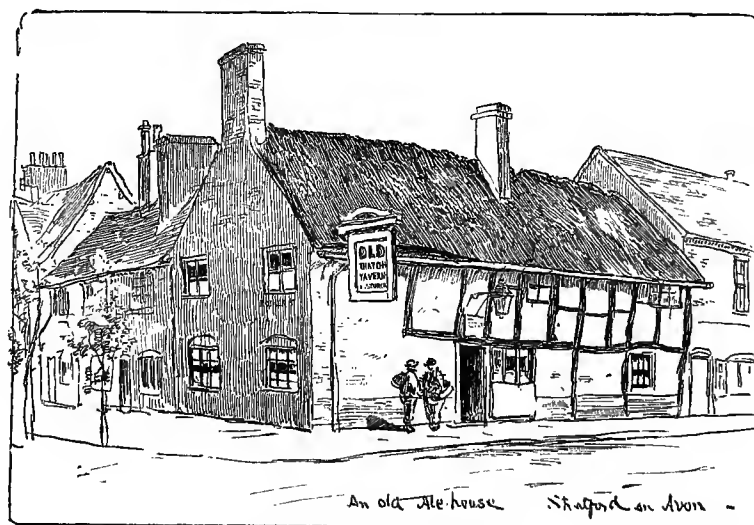
It was doubtless at Stratford, too, that Shakespeare learnt how in such seasons "the moon, the governess of floods, . . . washes all the air,

"That rheumatic diseases do abound."

Besides the dangers of plague, fires, and floods, Stratford ran sometimes the risk of starvation. Grain at times was so scarce that the corporation had to distribute corn on its own account, and made an inventory of all to be found in the town. One of the most serious dearths occurred in 1598, and "the note of corn and malt taken" at the time is extant. John Shakespeare appears to have owned none, but his son, at New Place, had

as much as ten quarters, a quantity which few of his neighbours exceeded. The laws enforced against grain-dealers, prohibiting them from buying up corn to sell at famine prices in times of dearth, broke undoubtedly the violence of these visitations, but they did not come without forcing many to suffer.

These details will help us to form a good working conception of the conditions of business life led by Shakespeare's father, and by the majority of the poet's contemporaries and fellow-townsmen. We can picture John Shakespeare of a morning wrapping his gown about him, and hurrying past the market-cross down High Street, as the clock strikes nine, to a meeting of the town council in the guildhall or council chamber, and cursing the pigs that impede his progress. We can watch him on a market day purchasing pewter ware in Wood Street or salt in Rother Market, and at the fair driving a brisk trade on his own account in wool, corn, and gloves. Now and then, by means of tallies, he reckons up his gains and losses, and laments the slackness of trade and the perversity of debtors and creditors. He takes an absorbing interest in his garden and orchard, and sees the apples stored in autumn. He visits his namesake in Bridge Street when he is in need of boots, and is on intimate terms with Richard Sponer, the painter, of Chapel Lane, who has been persecuted by the town-bully, William Bott. Every night in winter he carefully hangs a lamp out before his house, and before nine o'clock he and his household are at rest. Sometimes he is summoned later by cries of fire, and has to work his two buckets in behalf of a neighbour's barn or house. He cannot write nor read, but he has a distant respect for book-learning. Nothing indeed that he does or has done, amid his serious and prosaic avocations, seems likely to invest his children with anything akin to the genius of poetry. Nevertheless, while he is still striving with declining success to make a living out of the wool and gloves that he keeps stored in his house in Henley Street, it is his eldest son who becomes the brightest of all lights in the world of poetry.



## XVI.

## DOMESTIC AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE.

A STRICT discipline, similar in principle to that enforced by the town council upon the burgesses, was maintained by the sober citizens within their own dwellings over their servants and children. From his earliest infancy we can roughly trace the stern habits of life in which attempts were made to train William Shakespeare. The "Books of Nurture" frequently published in the sixteenth century illustrate the manners which the middle-class father strove to impress upon his sons. The boy was to rise at six o'clock in the morning, carefully to attend to the more necessary portions of his toilet, and to brush his clothes. At meals he had to lay the table and wait on his parents, in whose presence he was not to talk or laugh but in moderation. After his parents rose from the table, he might say his grace and take his own meal. His eating and drinking were to be carefully regulated. In the streets he had to take off his cap to his elders. He was to go to bed early, and say prayers morning and evening. The father was not to be sparing in the use of the rod.

John Shakespeare and his wife Mary Arden, who was related to a good county family, and, perhaps, was herself well educated, were evidently determined to give their eldest son as good an education as Stratford afforded. Doubtless the clerk of the town, like the clerk of Chatham in "2 Henry VI.," who is detected by Cade's followers "setting of boys' copies," was capable of teaching the boys the hornbook—such writing and reading as enabled them to gain admission to the grammar school. It was probably about 1571 that William proceeded for the first time to the schoolhouse.

The dissolution of the Stratford guild did not involve, as we have seen, the dissolution of the old school of the guild. On the margin of the report made by the King's Commissioners in 1548, a royal officer wrote, "*Continuetur schola quousque*," and the school entered soon afterwards on a new lease of life. In June, 1553, it was created by royal charter, "The King's New School of Stratford-upon-Avon"—"a certain free grammar school, to consist of one master and teacher, hereafter for ever to endure." The schoolmaster was to be appointed by the Earl of Warwick, to whom the manor and borough had been granted when the Bishop of Worcester's claim had been ignored, and he was to receive twenty pounds a year, which "a gift of certain lands to the value yearly of xlvi*li*. iijs. ijd. ob. [£46 3s. 2½*d.*]," made by the king to the burgesses, was partly to defray. This "school at Stratford," we learn from Strype, "was the last this prince founded." The endowment is not yet exhausted, although the corporation, after the Duke's execution, took to itself the government of the school; and the boys of Stratford still enjoy the advantages of Edward VI.'s foundation. The schoolhouse stood as it stands to-day with slight alteration, under the shadow of the guild chapel. It formed part of the municipal buildings in Church Street. The schoolrooms were reached from an inner yard by an external staircase "roofed with tile," which was demolished about forty-four years ago. Above them was a "soller"—a still higher story or garret—which was taken down in 1568. The fabric of the house, which had seen service in the days of the ancient guild, was old and in need of repair in Shakespeare's boyhood; and in 1568 it underwent several amendments. A few years later the rooms became uninhabitable and underwent further renovation. While they were under repair the master had to take his pupils into the chapel itself. This was probably not an uncommon practice. Shakespeare likened Malvolio to "a pedant that

keeps school i' the church." But in 1595 the holding of school in church or chapel was forbidden for the future.

To this school the children of the Stratford freemen were sent, with rare exceptions. It was one of those "common schools" that received, according to a contemporary account, "all sorts of children to be taught, be their parents never so poor and the boys never so unapt." And from Henley Street, some three hundred yards away, came each morning, from 1571 onwards, William, the seven-year-old son of John Shakespeare. His description penned thirty years later of

"the whining school-boy, with his satchel,  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school,"

is doubtless a reminiscence of this daily walk. The education supplied at a free day-school in Elizabethan England depended largely on the attainments of the schoolmaster, and these varied very much in quality with times and places. According to many contemporary writers, bad schoolmasters prevailed. "It is a general plague and complaint of the whole land," writes Peacham in the seventeenth century, "for, for one discreet and able teacher, you shall find twenty ignorant and careless; who (among so many fertile and delicate wits as *England* affordeth), whereas they make one scholar, they mar ten;" and Roger Ascham some years before had written in the same strain. In many towns the office of schoolmaster was conferred on "an ancient citizen of no great learning." Sometimes a quack, conjuring doctor, like Pinch, of the "Comedy of Errors," held the post. An eccentric master of St. Alban's School in the middle of the sixteenth century paid so much deference to the parents of his pupils, that "by no entreaty would [he] teach any scholar he had farther than his father had learned before them." His reason was, they would then prove saucy rogues and control their fathers. From the comparatively small number of burgesses at Stratford who could sign their names in the middle of the sixteenth century, we may infer that William Dalam, the last master appointed by the ancient guild, was no very zealous or capable performer of the duties of his office. But the far smaller average of marksmen in subsequent years proves that Dalam's successors were fairly discreet and able pedagogues. The burgesses seem to have carefully selected them, and to have taken them on trial for two years at a time, and Walter Roche, appointed in 1570, Thomas Hunt, in 1577, and Thomas Jenkins, in 1580, apparently satisfied all the burgesses' requirements. The scholiasts have waxed warm in controversy over the educational equipment bestowed on the poet at Stratford; and while one has denied him the veriest elementary knowledge of the classics, another has credited him with the acquirements of a Bentley or a Porson. There is every reason to believe that Masters Roche and Hunt gave young Shakespeare and his schoolfellows a firm grasp of Latin at least, and led them from the *accidence* and Lilly's grammar through conversation books and colloquies, like the "*Sententiæ Pueriles*," up to Horace, Seneca, and Plautus, and "the rest of the finest Latin poets," of whom conscientious masters were advised by contemporary writers on education to give their pupils a taste. It is just possible that at the most efficient country schools the more advanced scholars, before the patronage of some neighbouring magnate or the bestowal of a college scholarship enabled them to proceed to the universities, learnt something of the Greek grammar, with the Greek Testament, and Isocrates or Demosthenes. But Shakespeare was doubtless withdrawn from school, in consequence of his father's pecuniary misfortunes, before he enjoyed these advantages. In the pedantic Holofernes of "*Love's Labour's Lost*," Shakespeare has carefully portrayed the best type of the rural schoolmaster, as in Pinch he has portrayed the worst, and the freshness and fulness of detail imparted to the former portrait may easily lead to the conclusion that its author was drawing upon his own experience. Holofernes does not long appear on the stage before he pompously quotes from Lilly's grammar: "*Vir sapit qui pauca loquitur*." His words, "*sanguis*, blood, . . . . .

*coelum*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven, . . . . . *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth," are veritable extracts from phrase-books like the "*Sententiæ Pueriles*," which lads had to learn by heart, and they well illustrate the practice in vogue of inviting boys to supply English synonyms to Latin words proposed by the master. The formal dialogue in which Holofernes and his friend the curate, Sir Nathaniel, engage—

Hol. "*Novi hominem tanquam te : anne intelligis ?*"

Nath. "*Laus Deo, bene intelligo.*"

Nath. "*Videsne quis venit ?*"

Hol. "*Video et gaudeo.*"

is framed on models to be met with in many popular Elizabethan school-books of familiar dialogues. And Shakespeare elsewhere proves his intimacy with the dialogue in such volumes specially marked for use in a school, when he makes Holofernes allude to their common phrases—

"He speaks false Latin. *Diminuit Prisciani caput.*"

"It is barbarous Latin. *Olet barbariem*"—

in the criticism of Sir Nathaniel's Latin as "*Priscian a little scratched*," and in the remark, "*I smell false Latin*," on the country clown's burlesque misreading of "*ad dunghill*" for "*ad unguem*." The pedagogue's citation of a line and a half from "the good old Mantuan" (the mediæval poet Mantuanus, whose eclogues, often preferred to Virgil's in the sixteenth century, formed the chief study of the fourth form in many grammar schools), his attempts to recall his Horace, his praises of Ovid as the writer whose works were to be studied by Latin versemakers, may all fairly be interpreted as memories of the instruction given at Stratford.

It was usual for a boy to remain at the grammar school for seven years at least, from the age of seven to that of fourteen, and unless the master was singularly incapable, and the boys singularly rebellious, it was seldom that a young Elizabethan failed to acquire some useful knowledge in his schooldays. He seldom left school without being able to "write and read English and congrue Latin." But schoolboy morality was not very high, and by the practice of little frauds it was possible, we learn from contemporary sources, for idle pupils to make "shift to escape correction" without making any progress at the schoolhouse. An ingenious device of "prompting" one another was practised by boys, born in the same year as young Shakespeare, at Gloucester Grammar School; a few pupils would prepare the lesson given them overnight, and "being at the elbows" of their idle companions, would put into their mouths answers to their master's question as he walked up and down by them. One of the boys named Willis has amusingly recounted his own experience of this system. After pursuing it for a long while with complete success, "it fell out on a day that one of the eldest scholars and one of the highest form fell out with me upon occasion of some boys' play abroad," and all help from the prompters was denied him. His companions looked forward to seeing him "fall under the rod," but he gathered all his wits together, began to study for himself, and "so the evil intended to me by my fellow-scholar, turned to my great good." Small frauds of this kind were encouraged by the severity of the discipline adopted in all the rural schools. The birch was in continual request, and was administered with alarming brutality. Roger Ascham has described how recklessly floggings were awarded at Eton, and in the smaller schools the masters were under less intelligent supervision. A repulsive picture of the terrors which the schoolhouse had for a nervous child is drawn in a "pretie and merry new interlude," entitled "*The Disobedient Child*," compiled by Thomas Ingelend, late student in Cambridge," about 1560. A boy who implores his father not to force him to go to school, tells of his companions' sufferings there—how

"Their tender bodies both night and day  
Are whipped and scourged, and beat like a stone,  
That from top to toe the skin is away ;"

and a story is repeated of how a scholar was tormented to death by "his bloody master."

Other accounts show that the playwright has not gone far beyond the fact. Peacham describes a schoolmaster with whom he was acquainted, "who in winter would ordinarily, on a cold morning, whip his boys even for no other purpose than to get himself a heat." Nevertheless, we believe that Masters Roche and Hunt were of a milder disposition. Holofernes, although of a dry humour, seems well disposed towards his pupils, and is invited in the play to dine with the father of one of them. Sir Hugh Evans asks his pupil, William Page, "some questions in his accidence," when he meets him with his mother on a school holiday, granted at the request of Master Slender, with a geniality that makes it probable that his creator knew many of his profession who wielded the rod with discrimination.

## XVII.

*THE OCCUPATIONS OF STRATFORD LADS.*

A FEW lads on leaving school passed on to the universities, or inns of court, to proceed in the study of the common law, divinity, or physic. At both Oxford and Cambridge charitable endowments maintained a large number of poor scholars. Sir Hugh Clopton had, as we have seen, left money for such a purpose. Rich parents were usually anxious to give their children an opportunity of pursuing an academic career. Of the poor university scholars, the majority entered the Church, and a great number of them gained high preferments there. Their wealthier companions usually sought their fortunes at the bar, and they not seldom fell in with riotous youths of rank at the university or in London, and in the end swelled the band of military adventurers by sea and land. But the larger proportion of the boys of a rural grammar school looked forward to earning a livelihood by trade in their native town. And it was not an infrequent objection urged by practical men against the seven or eight years spent by the lads at school, that the time might have been better occupied in teaching them "a mystery or occupation." When a boy's schooldays were over, it was usual for his father to apprentice him to himself if an eldest son, or to a neighbour if a younger one, and seven years were consumed in the process of learning a trade. The restrictions on trading at the time rendered this step incumbent on any parent who valued his son's future prosperity. No man who had not undergone a legally recognized apprenticeship was permitted by the municipal laws to open a shop or practice any craft within the borough, or to exercise any of the rights of a freeman. "No person," ran an order issued by the burgesses of Stratford on 13th April, 1603, "shall set up, occupy, or exercise any trade, mystery, or occupation before he be made free or confirmed in his freedom of the same trade whereunto he was apprentice." In all towns the apprentices formed the least orderly portion of the population, and the regulations enforced against them at Stratford—that they were to be at home before nine o'clock at night, that they were never to wear swords, and that they were not to tipple at the alehouses,—prove that the older burgesses had some experience of their irregularities. Many of them doubtless more than once spent three days and three nights in the stocks. Whether or no Shakespeare on quitting school became one of them ("he was formerly in this town," wrote Aubrey, "bound apprentice to a butcher," *i.e.*, apprentice to his father), there can be little doubt that the apprentices whom he had known at school were his intimate companions in early manhood. The tradition recorded by Aubrey distinctly states, too, that "there was at that time another butcher's son in this town, that was held not at all inferior to him for a natural wit, his acquaintance and coetanean, but died young." Some of his schoolfellows doubtless found another kind of occupation in the great houses of the country gentlemen in the neighbourhood of Stratford. It was their custom to keep a large retinue of serving-men—"comely men, and commonly sons of honest yeomen or farmers of the country"—who led a lazy life in the manorhouses, wearing good garments or liveries, aiding in their master's sports, and attending him at his meals. They were skilled, as a rule, in wrestling, leaping, running, and dancing; they could shoot with the long-bow or cross-bow, handle guns well, and entertain their masters with table-talk about hawks, hounds, fishing, and agriculture. Their profession brought them in some forty pounds a year, besides a good livery with a badge upon it, and in their master's absence they were wont to entertain their own guests in his



hall. The menial servants—the bakers, brewers, chamberlains, wardrobers, falconers, hunters, horsekeepers, lackeys, fools, cooks, scullions, hogherds, and the like—were far below them in social status. Shakespeare introduces serving-men on the stage as the confidants of their masters in the persons of Tranio and Balthasar; and Malvolio, Olivia's steward, was of their class. The author of an interesting tract, entitled "The English Courtier and Country Gentleman" (1586), which deals largely with "the superfluity of serving-men" kept in country houses, designates them as so much unprofitable furniture, and points out how they were proud and ill-natured, and wasted their master's substance. Of the houses near Stratford into which young townsmen were received, the nearest was doubtless Clopton House. At Charlecote Sir Thomas Lucy, at Milcote Sir Edward Greville, and at Long Compton Lord Compton maintained large establishments; while at no great distance was the castle of Kenilworth, in the occupation for the greater part of Elizabeth's reign of the Earl of Leicester, a son of a former owner, the ill-fated Duke of Northumberland. At all these great buildings, Shakespeare in all probability frequently visited schoolfellows who had secured places in their owners' retinues.

But there were doubtless many young Stratford men who were of more adventurous dispositions. Of these a few probably offered their services to commanders bound for the wars on the continent, and some Stratford men might be found in the troops led by the Earl of Leicester to the Netherlands in 1585. Others found their way to London to seek employment there. John Sadler was one of these in Shakespeare's time, and an account of his early life is interesting. On quitting Stratford he "joined himself to the carrier, and came to London, where he had never been before, and sold his horse in Smithfield; and, having no acquaintance in London to recommend him or assist him, he went from street to street, and house to house, asking if they wanted an apprentice, and though he met with many discouraging scorns and a thousand denials, he went on till he lighted on Mr. Brokesbank, a grocer in Bucklersbury, who, though he long denied him for want of sureties for his fidelity, and because the money he had (but ten pounds) was so disproportionable to what he used to receive with apprentices, yet, upon his discreet account he gave of himself and the motives which put him upon that course, and promise to compensate with diligent and faithful service whatever else was short of his expectation, he ventured to receive him upon trial, in which he so well approved himself that he accepted him into his service, to which he bound him for eight years."

Another native of Stratford who sought an apprenticeship in London was Richard Field, son of that Henry Field, tanner, whose property was inventoried by his friend, John Shakespeare, in 1592. Richard Field was apprenticed to a printer in London in 1579, and in 1587 set up in business for himself. It is of interest to note that in 1593 he printed his fellow-townsmen's "Venus and Adonis," and later his "Rape of Lucrece."

There is a current tradition that certain actors who acquired Elizabethan fame were natives of Stratford, and sought admission to a company of players on its visit to the town during a provincial tour. Thomas Greene and the two Burbages, James and Richard, have been claimed by the borough's historians as Shakespeare's fellow-townsmen; but in no case has the evidence proved very conclusive. Nevertheless, it is certain that Stratford was visited with sufficient frequency by the London actors to induce some young men there, who found the working out of their long apprenticeships wearisome work, to look in the direction of the drama for relief from uncongenial occupations. Of these young men William Shakespeare was probably one. Of his mode of life between 1578 and 1585, it may be stated as fairly certain that his father, during that period, endeavoured to secure his services in rehabilitating his decaying trade; that William took unkindly to the pursuit of woolstapling in all its manifold branches; that he believed himself capable of making his way as actor and playwright; and that he set out for London to try his fortune in these professions.

## XVIII.

*THE PLAYERS AT STRATFORD.*

IF John Shakespeare ever regretted—as many a sober citizen of the day might have done—his son's choice of this primrose path, he had only himself to blame. He was undoubtedly a lover of plays, like all his friends of the town council. While he was bailiff in 1568-9, he granted licences to play in the town to the Queen's players and the Earl of Worcester's players, two of the chief companies. Nine times between 1573 and 1581 did these or other companies enter the town with drum and trumpet, wearing their noble masters' badge, and give their performances in the guildhall. Very few of the town chamberlains down to the close of the century failed to enter in their annual accounts an item varying very capriciously from nine pounds to twelvepence on behalf of dramatic entertainments at the fair time in September. In 1597, payments were made to four companies. Every manner of show could, in fact, reckon on a good reception in Stratford; and in 1597 the bailiff sent three shillings and fourpence to a man bringing to the town his puppet show of the city of Norwich, a famous show to which the dramatists often made allusion. Shakespeare as a child undoubtedly witnessed such performances; and the circumstantial account given by a Gloucester contemporary named Willis—born in the same year as the poet—of his father's practice of taking him to the play, may well apply to William Shakespeare. The plays Willis witnessed were interludes—brief moralities with the semblance of a plot about them. When the players came to a town, he tells us, they first waited on the mayor or bailiff to inform him “what nobleman's servants they were, and so get licence for their public playing.” If the mayor liked the players, or wished to show their master respect, he would invite them to play for their first performance in the guildhall before himself and the aldermen. “That is called the mayor's play, when everyone that will comes in without money, the mayor giving the players as he thinks to show respect unto them.” Afterwards they would perform in the courtyard of an inn, as at the Swan, Bear, or Crown, in Bridge Street, Stratford, and charge for admission. According to his account of his youth, Willis witnessed the mayor's play, standing between his father's legs, “while he sat upon one of the benches, and where we saw and heard very well.” The interlude performed was the “Cradle of Security,” in which the chief characters were the Wicked of the World, Pride, Covetousness, Luxury, the End of the World, and the Last Judgment. “The sight,” Willis adds, “took such impression on me that when I came to man's estate, it was as fresh in my memory as if I had seen it newly acted.” It is quite possible, moreover, that John Shakespeare occasionally took his son over to Coventry to witness the famous miracles or mysteries on Corpus Christi Day—the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. The Stratford townsfolk had doubtless from an early period been wont to witness these performances. In “The Hundred Merry Tales,” first issued in 1526, a popular jest-book of the sixteenth century, whence Beatrice taunts Benedick with having borrowed his wit, is the story of a Warwickshire village priest, who concluded a sermon on the twelve articles of the creed with the words, “If you believe not me, then for a more surety and sufficient authority, go your way to Coventry, and then ye shall see them all played in Corpus Christi play.” Thence Shakespeare, in all probability, obtained his knowledge of the grotesquely-painted canvas face, whose mouth was contrived to open on a fire to represent hell, of the sooty-faced figures that stood for lost souls, of Herod in

his many-coloured dress and flaming sword, and of the Devil and his tormentor and successor, the Vice. That the poet knew these features of the mysteries and something of their machinery, is clear from such references as Falstaff's comparison of the flea on Bardolph's nose to "a black soul burning in hell," or Hamlet's advice to the players to avoid inexplicable dumb-shows and noise that outhierods Herod, or the Clown's description in "Twelfth Night" of the "old Vice,"

" Who, with dagger of lath,  
In his rage and his wrath,  
Cries, ah, ha ! to the devil."

It may be that among the Stratford people themselves, as in other towns and villages, pageants of rudimentary dramatic interest were played by the "bachelry" at Christmas or Whitsuntide. In "Love's Labour's Lost," the show of the "Nine Worthies," presented by the schoolmaster and his companions, has all the features of a rural Christmas comedy, and the "Pyramus and Thisbe" of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is constructed and presented by "hard-handed men,"

" Which never laboured in their minds till now,  
And now have toiled their unbreathed memories  
With this same play."

A similar entertainment is described by Julia in the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," another of Shakespeare's earliest comedies, when she, disguised as a page, is enlisting Silvia's sympathy in her own behalf. "At Pentecost," she says,

" When all our pageants of delight were play'd,  
Our youth got me to play the woman's part,  
And I was trimm'd in madam Julia's gown ;  
Which served me as fit, by all mens' judgments,  
As if the garment had been made for me : . . .  
For I did play a lamentable part :  
Madam, 'twas Ariadne, passioning  
For Theseus' perjury, and unjust flight."

Similar pageants and interludes were played at intervals at the neighbouring great country houses, where, as in the "Taming of the Shrew" and "Hamlet," strolling companies often offered their services ; and there is reason to believe that Shakespeare's father took him when eleven years old to Kenilworth, to witness the elaborate performances arranged to honour the Queen's visit there to Lord Leicester in 1575. Every movement that Elizabeth made on this occasion was marked by some quaint semi-dramatic device. As she first approached the castle on Saturday, the 9th of July, a Sibyl met her, prophesying prosperity to her government. The porter who opened the gate was disguised as Hercules. When she passed a pond in the outer court, female figures personating water nymphs offered her welcome. Next day a display of fireworks took place. Monday was occupied in hunting, ingeniously diversified by a sylvan masque. In whatever direction the Queen rode in the neighbouring country during the ensuing week, the villagers arranged similar shows for her delight. Reminiscences of these pageants have been detected by the commentators in Oberon's famous description, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," of the whereabouts of the little western flower, Love-in-idleness.

## XIX.

*RURAL SPORTS.*

THUS we may receive without much misgiving the theory that Shakespeare was encouraged while still a boy at Stratford to honour the drama; and that it was in accordance with an early ambition that he sought employment in 1585 at a London playhouse. But the drama was not the only amusement in which Shakespeare's plays prove him to have taken part; there are many indications that, as a youth, he practised all manner of rural sports, and did not always escape censure in pursuit of them. Many of them he doubtless engaged in far from Stratford, for he had many relatives among the farmers of the district, and they all encouraged young men in athletic exercises. There were his grandmother, Agnes Arden, still living at Wilmecote, and his father's brother, Henry, still farming at Snitterfield. Rustic games for all ages and dispositions are mentioned in Shakespeare's plays. In his early comedies he refers to the "whipping of tops," "hide and seek," "more sacks to the mill," "pushpin," and "nine men's morris," a game played on turf, which seems to have resembled "fox and geese," now played with marbles on a wooden board. "Nine-pins" or "ten-pins," "quoits," "hockey," "football," "leap frog," "country base" or "prisoner's base," "fast and loose," and "flap-dragon," were all rural diversions in Elizabethan days to which Shakespeare makes allusion. Bowls formed a more solemn urban recreation, and the town council maintained a bowling alley, as well as at least one top for the boys. At Whitsuntide, or the beginning of May, there were village dances about the may-pole in which young and old took part, "busied with a Whitsun morris-dance"; and there were far-famed athletic meetings on the Cotswold Hills, at which Will Squeele, according to Justice Shallow, was a "swinge-buckler." The Cotswold games were greatly improved by one Captain Dover, of Barton-on-the-Heath, not far from Stratford, at the close of Elizabeth's reign; and coursing with greyhounds was pursued there. Shakespeare clearly knew them well, and makes Slender ask John Page, "How does your fallow greyhound? I heard say, he was outrun at Cotsale." Even John Shakespeare, like the franklin described by Sir Thomas Overbury, doubtless "allowed of honest pastime, and thought not the bones of the dead anything bruised, or the worse for it, though the country lasses danced in the churchyard after evensong." Probably, also, "Rock-Monday, and the wake in summer, Shrotings, the wakeful catches on Christmas eve, the hoky or seed-cake, these he yearly kept, yet held them no relics of Popery." Rock-Monday followed Twelfth Day, and celebrated the resumption of the distaff or rock by the housewives after the twelve days' festivities at Christmas time. Shrove Tuesday, when apprentices made holiday, was chiefly consecrated to pancakes, cockfights and cockthrowing. Hock-tide, the Monday and Tuesday after the second Sunday following Easter, was devoted to banquettings and to sports, like wrestling, hurling, and shooting at the butts. At Coventry the Corpus Christi play was often repeated then, or one of rougher merriment performed. Harvest homes were also honoured with like celebration, and especially with "barley-break," a game played by lads and lasses in the cornfields, which seems to have roughly resembled prisoner's base. Then it was often that

"Corin sat all day  
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love  
To amorous Phillida."

Bearbaitings occasionally diversified the amusements of the country side, and in dancing and morris-dancing all the young people indulged on "the wanton green" through many a long summer's evening.

Of more elaborate country sports with which Shakespeare was clearly well acquainted, although he probably in early life witnessed them from afar, hunting and hawking hold the chief place. "An' a man have not skill in the hawking and hunting languages, I'll not give a rush for him," says Master Stephen in Jonson's "Every Man in His Humour"; and there is no lack of evidence that Shakespeare studied them both. He clearly had an ear for the music of the hounds, and often marked

"The musical confusion  
Of hounds and echo in conjunction."

Theseus knows what hounds should be :—

"My hounds," he says, "are bred out of the Spartan kind,  
So flew'd, so sanded : and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew ;  
Crook-kneed, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls,  
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,  
Each under each. A cry more tunable  
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn."

Shakespeare doubtless learnt, too, at Stratford, the famous song of the hunt, to which he alludes in "Romeo and Juliet" :—

"The hunt is up, the hunt is up,  
Sing merrily we, the hunt is up :  
The birds they sing,  
The deer they fling,  
Hey ninny, ninny no."

"The noble art of venery" was often pursued in enclosed parks by the owners of the great houses, with trains of ladies, foresters, and other retainers, and deer was their chief quarry. Crossbows seem to have then vied with hounds in bringing down the prey. It is this method of hunting that Shakespeare elaborately describes in "Love's Labour's Lost," when the Princess and her ladies hunt the deer in the King of Navarre's park. But the stag chase and the boar chase were pursued in the open country. It is over "a poor sequester'd stag that from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt," that Jaques moralizes in well-known lines. Shakespeare especially recommends the hunting of the hare, the fox, and the roe, in his "Venus and Adonis;" and evidently knew, too, all the points of a hunter, which he describes in another famous passage of this first poem. It was not customary, however, to course the timorous hare on horseback, and it is very possible that Shakespeare had chased him himself in youth on foot. No more vivid picture of the chase of "poor Wat" is found in literature than in Shakespeare's account of it in "Venus and Adonis." We see there the poor wretch "out-running the wind," "cranking and crossing with a thousand doubles," eluding the cunning hounds among a flock of sheep or herd of deer, or "where earth-delving conies keep," then far off upon a hill "standing on hinder legs with listening ear"—

"To hearken if his foes pursue him still ;  
Anon their loud alarums he doth hear ;  
And now his grief may be compared well  
To one sore sick, that hears the passing bell."

Hawking—"a princely delight," as one contemporary writer calls it, or "a pleasure for high and mounting spirits," according to another designation—was a more elaborate sport than hunting, and was invariably confined to the rich, although the country people delighted to watch its operations of a winter's morning, or to listen by night to the falconers' stories

of their hawks' prowess. Similes and metaphors without number has Shakespeare drawn from this recreation, and his continual use of its technical terms, all of which are now obsolete, accounts for the obscurity of many passages in his plays. Hawks went by a variety of names, according to their age and training, and Shakespeare uses them all. There was the wild and incorrigible haggard, to which Petruchio likens his shrew, Katharine :—

“ Another way I have to man my haggard,  
To make her come, and know her keeper's call ;  
That is,—to watch her as we watch these kites,  
That bate, and beat, and will not be obedient.

(To bate is to flutter the wings.) There was the eyas-musket, the hawk in its infancy, and the tassel-gentle, the mate of the goss-hawk, to which frequent allusion is made by the dramatist. Shakespeare knew how the hawks were unhooded and whistled off the fist, to which jesses and lures attached them, or how, when they were incapable of benefiting at the trainer's hands, they were let down the wind. Probably, too, Shakespeare was not unacquainted with less dignified sport in which birds were the prey. He talks of “bat-fowling,” which is a Cotswold expression for taking birds by night in hand-nets, and of “setting springes for woodcocks.” “The creeping fowler” is described in “*Midsummer Night's Dream*,” at a time when shooting birds was not a legitimate sport, as scattering by his gun's report wild geese or russet-pated choughs.

## XX.

*POACHING IN CHARLECOTE PARK. FISHING.*

**I**F tradition be admitted in evidence, the poet would not have looked upon these practices with any the less favour because they were unlawful or unrecognized. Poaching was another pastime in which he did not disdain to indulge, and the whole course of his life was altered, according to an ancient story, by his detection in the act at Charlecote Park. "The frolic of Shakespeare in deer stealing was the cause of his Hegira," says Landor, and although there is something to be urged against this statement, it probably has some truth about it.

Charlecote—said to come from the Saxon *Ceorlescote*, or serf's home—lies on the Avon, four miles up stream from Stratford. Early in the thirteenth century its owner assumed the name of Lucy, and all his successors in the property were of the influential Warwickshire gentry from whom high sheriffs were chosen, and from Edward I.'s time they usually represented the county in Parliament. One of the earliest of them, Fulk de Lucy, was "a special lover of good horses," and all of them piously gave rich gifts to the Church. Thomas Lucy, knighted in 1565, was the son of William Lucy. In 1558 he rebuilt the manorhouse at Charlecote "of brick as it now stands," and, in spite of additions made in 1833, it forms one of the best surviving examples of Elizabethan architecture in the country. There is a detached gate-house built of red brick, with stone window dressings, of which the upper floor, forming one room, was used for banquets, and the lower was occupied by the porter. Beneath the archway of this building a terrace leads to the house, "which consists of a central part between boldly-projecting wings with angle turrets." The porch, of freestone, slightly to the left of the centre, is a fine piece of renaissance architecture, and is attributed to John of Padua, supposed to be identical with John Thorpe, the architect of Theobalds, Buckhurst, and Holland House. The hall is still unaltered, and in it stand chairs, couch, and cabinets of coromandel wood, inlaid with ivory, and said to have been given by Elizabeth to Leicester in 1575, and to have been removed from Kenilworth after his death in 1588. Charlecote was one of the houses visited by the Queen on her famous visit to Kenilworth in 1575. In the ancient church in the little village hard by, which was lately replaced by a modern edifice of some architectural pretensions, all the Lucys lay buried. Sir Thomas set up a monument there to his first wife Joyce, who died in 1595, and he himself followed her in 1603. He wrote the epitaph on Lady Joyce's tomb, and described her as "a great maintainer of hospitality."

It was in the park said to have surrounded Charlecote House that Shakespeare, with a band of idle companions, is reputed to have perpetrated his deer-stealing, and it was Sir Thomas Lucy, in the hall at Charlecote, before whom he is stated to have been summoned to take his trial for the offence. The story rests upon a note made by a Reverend Richard Davis, of Sandford, Oxfordshire, about a century after the alleged event. Shakespeare, according to Davis, "was much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits; particularly from Sir [Thomas] Lucy, who had him oft whipped and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly his native country, to his great advancement." Rowe added the story of how, to revenge himself upon Sir Thomas for his ill-usage, Shakespeare made a ballad upon him, and, according to an old inhabitant of Stratford, in the eighteenth century, nailed his manuscript on the park gates at Charlecote. There are many objections to the tale. It is uncertain whether Charlecote House had then, as now, a deer-park about it. Deer-stealing, moreover,

was punishable by three months' imprisonment and a fine to the value of the theft, or could be referred to the Star Chamber; but there is no indication in the Stratford council books of Shakespeare having ever been committed to gaol, or of his being brought before the great arbitrary London court. That Shakespeare knew something of such poaching expeditions, and felt sympathy with them, is clear from Falstaff's humorous answer to the charge Justice Shallow prefers against him of having beaten his men, killed his deer, and thrown open his lodge. And there are other good reasons to believe that Justice Shallow is a satiric portrait of Sir Thomas Lucy. His old coat-of-arms, Slender boasts, has "the dozen white luces" upon it—a reference to full-grown pikes which Sir Hugh Evans misinterprets; and three luces formed the arms of the Lucys of Charlecote. To the same device Falstaff alludes in his remark about Shallow, "If the young deer be a bait for the old pike (*ie.*, a luce), I see no reason in the law of nature but I may snap at him." Shallow, like Lucy, is a "justice of the peace and coram: ay, a cust-alorum; ay, and ratolorum, too; and a gentleman born, who writes himself armigero." There was surely some old score which Shakespeare desired, in the person of Justice Shallow, to pay off against Sir Thomas. To all Stratford youths he was a familiar figure, for he often came over to the town to take sack and sugar at the Bear with the aldermen and burgesses. But whether the poet resented punishment for deer-stealing at his hands must remain a mere conjecture.

The Avon, with its "wind'ring brooks, with their sedg'd crowns and ever harmless nooks," must have also introduced the Elizabethan dwellers to some river sport. It was not made navigable for even small boats till 1635, and rowing as a recreation grew up at a much later date. But fishing has always had its English votaries. Few of the mediæval monasteries in this country lacked their anglers; and the literature of the sixteenth century was graced by many tributes of no mean value to "an exercise so much laudable." The incidental references that Shakespeare makes to the angler's art, the poetic fulness of his descriptions of the banks and "fair course" of rivers, and the distinctness with which he occasionally speaks of various fresh-water fish, makes it almost certain that he himself, like others of his townsmen, had trolled for pike or luces, and tickled trout—for in those days fly-fishing was not—in the Warwickshire or Gloucestershire streams. If the Avon then, as now, only possessed fish of the rank of dace and bream, pike and perch, the Elizabethan angler had but to make his way from Stratford to the streams that run from the Cotswolds into the Severn or the sources of the Thames, to enter a paradise where trout seldom failed him. Within a few miles of Stratford lived one of the most enthusiastic anglers of Shakespeare's time—a Gloucestershire squire named John Dennis, who gave voice to his passion in a long poem called the "Secrets of Angling," first published in 1613. In the verses the joys of the angler are extolled above those of any other sportsman, and the author details the pleasures that he had experienced of seeing his "quill and cork down sink, with eager bite of barbel, bleak, or dace." If Shakespeare, who described how

"The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish  
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream,  
And greedily devour the treacherous bait,"

ever lived in his youth at Dursley, as many writers have urged, he surely helped Dennis to fish his waters, whether with or without his permission.



ARMS OF LUCY.



## XXI.

*INDOOR AMUSEMENTS.*

OF indoor amusements, few were probably in much vogue at Stratford. But cards seem to have been occasionally played.

"In foul weather," says Vincent, the country gentleman, in the Dialogue with an English Courtier (1586), "we send for some honest neighbours, if haply we be with our wives alone at home (as seldom we are) and with them we play at Dice, and Cards, sorting ourselves according to the number of players, and their skill, some to Ticktack, some Lurch, some to Irish game, or Doublets: other sit



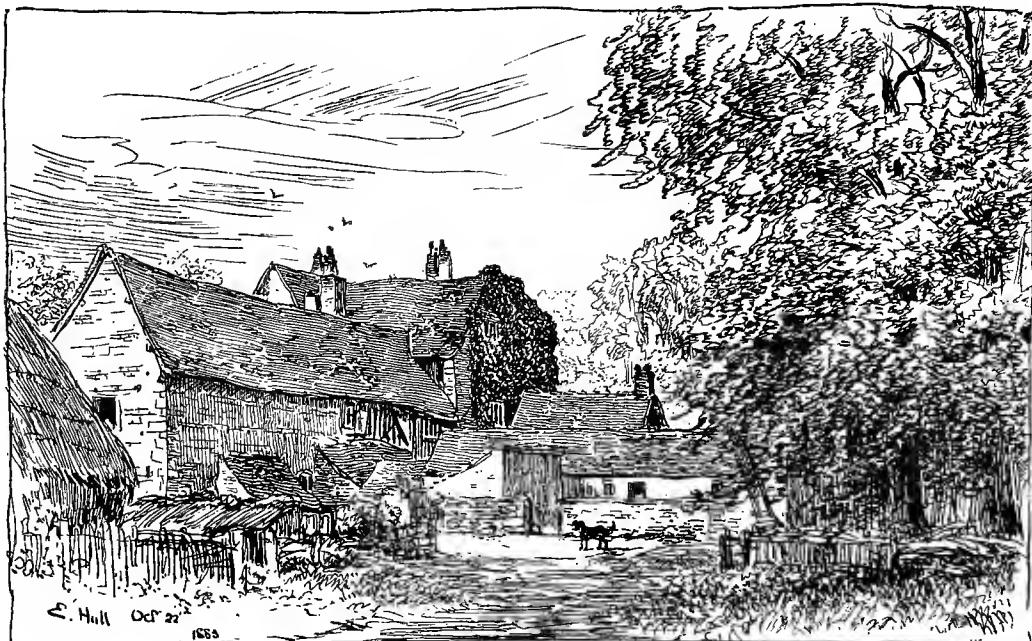
BIDFORD.

close to the Cards, at Post, and Pair, at Ruff or Colchester Trump, at Mack or Maw: yea, there are some ever so fresh gamesters, as will bear you company at Novem Quinque, at Faring, Tray trip, or one and thirty, for I warrant you, we have right good fellows in the country; sometimes also (for shift of sports, you know, is delectable) we fall to Slide Thrift, to Penny prick, and in winter nights we use certain Christmas games very proper, and of much agility; we want not also pleasant mad-headed knaves, that be properly learned, and will read in diverse pleasant books and good Authors: as Sir Guy of Warwick, the Four Sons of Aymon, the Ship of Fools, the Budget of Demands, the Hundred Merry Tales, the Book of Riddles, and many other excellent writers both witty and pleasant. These pretty and pithy matters do sometimes recreate our minds, chiefly after long sitting and loss of money."

But many preferred to recreate themselves in an alchouse, and play there "shovel-board," an elementary form of bagatelle. The Stratford people tell still how Shakespeare often crossed from New Place to the Falcon Tavern, on the opposite side of Chapel Street, and played this game with his neighbours, at the very board now preserved in the house at New Place; but, unluckily for the tradition, we know very well that the tavern sprang up at a later date, and in

Shakespeare's day was a private dwelling-house, in the occupation, early in the seventeenth century, of Mrs. Katharine Temple, and later of Joseph Boles, a friend of John Hall, the poet's son-in-law. But there is another very persistent tradition at Stratford, to show that Shakespeare frequently took his ease in an inn. According to this account, Shakespeare engaged, as a youth, in a famous drinking-match at another tavern called the Falcon, at Bidford, some five or six miles from his native town. The tale dates, in its most authentic form, from no earlier year than 1762. A gentleman visiting Stratford was then taken to Bidford, and shown "in the hedge a crab-tree called Shakespeare's Canopy, because under it our poet slept one night; for he, as well as Ben Jonson, loved a glass for the pleasure of society; and he, having heard much of the men of the village as deep drinkers and merry fellows, one day went over to Bidford to take a cup with them;—he inquired of a shepherd for the Bidford drinkers, who replied they were absent, but the sippers were at home, and I suppose, continued the sheepkeeper, they will be sufficient for you; and so, indeed, they were;—he was forced to take up his lodgings under that tree for some hours."

This story has since been elaborated by Stratford writers, who make Shakespeare "extremely fond of drinking hearty draughts of English ale, and glorying in being thought a



HILLBOROUGH.

person of superior eminence in that profession," and assert that, being worsted in a drinking contest with the junior drinking club of the Sippers at Bidford, he, with his companions, slept under a crab-tree for a whole night, and on being pressed by them to renew the contest next day, declined, saying, "I have drank with

"Piping Pebworth, Dancing Marston,  
Haunted Hillborough, Hungry Grafton,  
Dadgeing Exhall, Papist Wixford,  
Beggary Broom, and Drunken Bidford"—

"meaning, by this doggrel, with the bibulous competitors who had arrived from the first-named seven villages, all of which are within a few miles of Bidford," and noted for the qualities indicated by the epithets. Bidford, although it now does its best to maintain its right to the epithet bestowed on it in these lines, was reputed in 1605 and 1606 to have its alehouses in good order and its rogues punished. In 1613, however, one John Darlingie was "presented"

there for "keeping ill rule in his house on the Sabbath in service time by selling of ale," and later in the century the alehouse-keepers were guilty of many irregularities. The room pointed out at Bidford as forming part of the Falcon Tavern where Shakespeare's match took place, and the antique chair at the Stratford birthplace stated to have belonged to the room, are relics of highly doubtful authenticity. Other versions of the tale make the drunken band sleep under the crab-tree "from Saturday night till the following Monday morning, when they were roused by workmen going to their labour." The crab-tree was still standing in the present century, but was removed in a decayed condition in 1824.

Another story affirms Shakespeare to have been a frequenter of another village inn at Wincot, or Wilmecote, his mother's birthplace, which "was resorted to by Shakespeare for the sake of diverting himself with a fool who belonged to a neighbouring mill." "Marian Hackett, the fat ale-wife of Wincot" has been identified with the "genial hostess" of this inn, and Stephen Sly, one of her customers in the "Taming of the Shrew," may be identified with a resident at Stratford who is sometimes described in the records as a labourer and sometimes as servant to William Combe. Perhaps at this inn, too, old John Naps, Peter Turf, and Henry Pimpernell held revelry. The references in the "Taming of the Shrew" to Wincot were well understood locally. Sir Aston Cokain, addressing a poem in 1658 to Mr. Clement Fisher, of Wincot, reminded him how

"Shakespeare your Wincot ale hath much renownd,  
That foxd a beggar so (by chance was found  
Sleeping) that there needed not many a word  
To make him to believe he was a lord."

The far-famed beggar, Kit Sly, was doubtless a Stratford character; he was probably nearly related to the Stephen Sly to whom reference has just been made, and to Joan Sly, who in 1630 was fined by the Stratford magistrates for breaking the Sabbath by travelling.

A quart of ale was a dish for a king all over England in Elizabethan days, and there is nothing more probable, although the proof must remain for ever incomplete, that Shakespeare indulged in alehouse festivities. The sober magistrates of Stratford did the same. They always celebrated the visits of the neighbouring gentry at quarter sessions by deep potations. Whenever Sir Thomas Lucy visited Stratford, a pottle of wine and a quarter of sugar, or a quart of burnt sack and sugar, were placed at his disposal either at the Swan or the Bear, or at one of the aldermen's private houses. Sir Edward Greville, the moat of whose manorhouse at Milcote is still visible in the fields there, came very often to the town at the close of the sixteenth century to be entertained at a municipal banquet, and to quaff his quart of sack and gallon of claret. His more famous relative, the poet, Sir Fulk Greville, also came over from Beauchamp's Court to take wine, sugar, and cakes with the magistrates. He or Sir Edward or Sir Thomas Lucy would send them a buck or doe to form the substance of their meal together, and would sometimes accept a sugar-loaf or a keg of sturgeon instead of wine. When the itinerant justices visited the town, or the muster of the trained bands of the district was held there, the town council was not sparing in its gifts of sack and claret or Rhenish wine. At one of these entertainments sixteenpence was spent in wine and a penny in bread—a collocation of items which reminds one of the monstrous "halfpennyworth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack." None the less, these aldermen and burgesses of Stratford set many a poor artificer in the stocks for three days and three nights for spending time in an alehouse that should have been more profitably spent.

## XXII.

## CHRISTENINGS AND MARRIAGES.

OTHER kinds of merrymaking celebrated the happy crises of domestic life. The christening of a child was a time of festival and gift-giving. Apostle-spoons were always bestowed on the infant among the middle classes, as silver and gold cups were bestowed among the upper. After baptism at the church font the child was wrapped in a chrisome, or white chrisom-cloth; and Dame Quickly refers to the practice when she compares Falstaff on his deathbed to "any christom child." Shakespeare must have often seen such ceremonies. His



STRATFORD, FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.

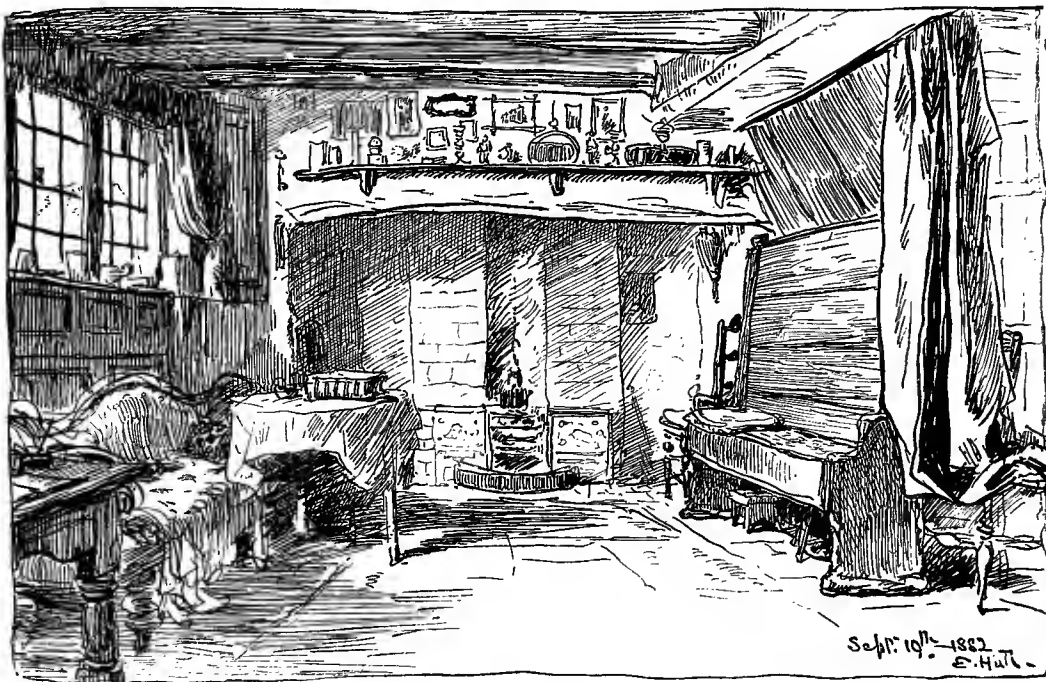
sister Joan, who afterwards married William Hart, of Stratford, was baptized when he was five years old; his sister Anna, who died at the age of eight, when he was seven; his brothers Richard and Edmund, when he was ten and sixteen respectively. His eldest daughter, Susanna, was baptized in the parish church, May 26th, 1583, and his twin children, Hamnet and Judith, February 2nd, 1585. Nor does this exhaust the list of christenings which he attended. The nephew of Sir Roger Lestrangle vouched for the story that Shakespeare was godfather to a son of Ben Jonson's, and gave him a dozen good *latin* (*i.e.*, brass) spoons, for his father, as he said jestingly, to translate.

But weddings formed the chief events in the domestic annals of Elizabethan merriment. There were first the espousals to be celebrated—the public announcement of betrothal. The clergyman directed this important domestic ceremony in the house of the bride's parents, and it

was often regarded in the country as equivalent to a marriage. Shakespeare describes its details in "Twelfth Night" as

"A contract of eternal bond of love,  
Confirm'd by mutual joinder of your hands,  
Attested by the holy close of lips,  
Strengthen'd by interchangement of your rings :"

and sealed finally by the testimony of the priest. The lady usually received from her lover a bent sixpence, or gloves, with handkerchiefs and fruit. The marriage ceremony followed at varying intervals. At the simplest weddings the bride was led to church in her best gown, with her hair hanging down her back, by boys "with bride laces and rosemary tied about their silken sleeves." A bride cup filled with wine was borne before her, decorated with rosemary and silk ribbons. Musicians and girls followed her, one of whom carried the



ANNE HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE, AT SHOTTERY.

bridal cake. The bridal cup appears from the account of Petruchio's wedding in the "Taming of the Shrew" to have been drunk in the church.

A full account of a Warwickshire "bride-ale," as the wedding was called, is given in the description of the Queen's visit to Kenilworth, when she graced one with her presence. Doubtless, Mary Arden was married to John Shakespeare at Wilmecote in 1557 with such ceremony as this. First came sixteen lusty lads and bold bachelors of the parish on horseback, two by two, with blue buckram bride laces and branches of green broom (because rosemary was scanty) on their left arms, and sticks of elder-tree in their right. Among them was the bridegroom in a tawny worsted jacket, "a fair straw hat with a capital crown, steeplewise upon his head," and a pair of harvest gloves in his hand. After this band came morris dancers and three fair girls. A country bumpkin followed them with the bride cup; behind him walked the bride between two ancient parishioners, honest men, and she was accompanied by two dozen damsels as bridesmaids. Shakespeare's own marriage with Anne Hathaway, of Shottery, a mile from Stratford, was probably less ceremonious. Both his and her parents disapproved of it, and there was certainly an awkward disparity of age between them, he being but eighteen

and she twenty-six. According to tradition, the marriage took place at Luddington, in a church which has now disappeared, and of which the schoolmaster, Thomas Hunt, was curate. The licence, or "bond against impediments," preserved in the Worcester registry, is dated November 28th, 1582. Two respectable husbandmen of Shotton, Falk Sandells and John Richardson, attest it. But espousals had doubtless been quietly solemnized earlier, and Anne Hathaway had then been betrothed to Shakespeare as his wife. Their first child was born in May, 1583.

There is an account extant of the celebration of a precontract, under similarly unprepossessing circumstances, at Alcester in 1588, where the contract took the place of a more regular marriage. The lady was present without any friends, and explained their absence by the statement that she thought she could not obtain her mother's goodwill, but nevertheless, quoth she, "I am the same woman that I was before." Her lover merely asked her "whether she was content to betake herself unto him, and she answered, offering her hand, which he also took upon the offer that she was content by her troth, and thereto, said she, I give thee my faith and before these witnesses, that I am thy wife; and then he likewise answered in these words, viz., And I give thee my faith and troth, and become thy husband." This was doubtless the form that Shakespeare's betrothal took, and, although not very irregular for those days, certainly caused many of his youthful embarrassments. Richard Hathaway's cottage at Shotton, reached from Stratford by open paths across wide meadows, is still standing, and an ancient chair by the chimney corner and bacon cupboard in the parlour is called "Shakespeare's courting chair." The house is encircled by an old-fashioned flower and kitchen garden, and forms a picturesque relic of Elizabethan country life. The Hathaways had been small farmers at Shotton before the middle of the sixteenth century, and there were branches of the family settled at Stratford. In 1580, another Anne Hathaway had married Alderman Wilson there, and a Thomas Hathaway, son of Margaret Hathaway, died at Stratford in 1601. There is evidence to prove that Richard Hathaway, Anne's father, who died in 1582, in the same year as Anne married, was, early in Elizabeth's reign, on friendly terms with John Shakespeare, and it is probable that the poet met Anne at his father's house for the first time. That he had an affection for her quiet native village is shown by the fact that in 1598 he contemplated the purchase there of "some odd yard-land." Probably the Richard Hathaway, or Hathaway, who takes his place in the lower ranks of the dramatists of London early in the next century, was a near relative of the great dramatist's wife.



OLD CHURCH OF LUDDINGTON.

## XXIII.

*SHAKESPEARE AT STRATFORD IN LATER LIFE.*

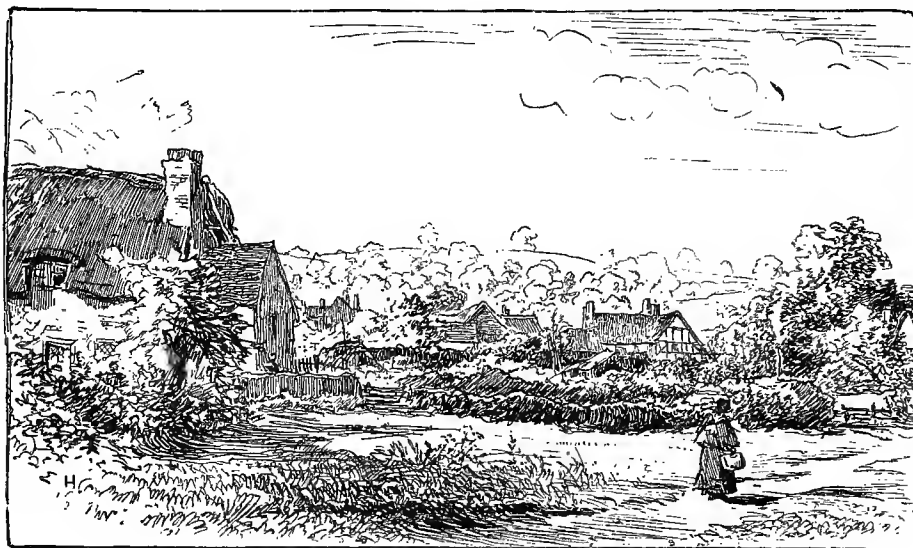
IT is no part of my present plan to trace the progressive career of Shakespeare as a dramatist. His life at Stratford as the woolstapler's son who "went to London very meanly, and came in time to be exceeding wealthy," is alone to be noted here. Nor will it be necessary to follow him in his journeyings to and fro the metropolis. His first journey was doubtless made in the covered waggon of the carrier who made weekly journeys, or on foot, but later he doubtless travelled on horseback. It was a common practice to hire horses for travelling at twelvepence the first day, and eightpence a day afterwards, until they were returned to the owner; but Shakespeare could have afforded long before his death to ride a horse of his own. There were two routes between Stratford and London—one by Oxford and High Wycombe, through Shipston-on-Stour, Chipping Norton, Woodstock, the Chilterns, Beaconsfield, Hillingdon Hill, Hanwell, Acton, and Kensington; the other by Banbury and Aylesbury. Tradition points to the former route as Shakespeare's favourite road, and signalizes the Crown Inn, near Carfax, at Oxford, as one of his resting-places, where he found "witty company" and a fair hostess with whom scandal will have it he made too free. Aubrey asserts that at Grendon, near Oxford, "he happened to take the humour of the constable in 'Midsummer Night's Dream'"—by which he meant, we may suppose, "Much Ado about Nothing"—but there were watchmen of the Dogberry type all over England, and probably at Stratford itself. Lord Burghley, writing to Walsingham in 1586, described how on a long journey he saw the watch at every town's end standing with long staves under alehouse pentices, and how at Enfield they declared they were watching for three young men, whom they would surely know because "one of the parties hath a hooked nose"—a statement upon which Burghley makes the prudent comment that "if they be no better instructed but to find three persons by one of them having a hooked nose, they may miss thereof." The inns all along the Elizabethan country roads were famed for their comfort. "The world affords," writes one traveller, Fynes Morison, "not such inns as England hath either for good and cheap entertainment after the guests' own pleasure, or for humble attendance on passengers; yea, even in very poor villages." The host and hostess and the servants zealously attended to the needs of horse and man. What was left over from a guest's supper was carefully preserved for his breakfast, his chamber was kept well cleaned and warmed, and a few pence was all that was expected by the chamberlain and ostler when the traveller left to pursue his journey. Up to the very last years of his life, Shakespeare paid frequent visits to London, and very often must he have hastened to his bed "with travel tired" at an hospitable roadside inn.

When Shakespeare left Stratford-on-Avon in 1585, his wife and three children remained behind, but at no period is it probable that he was long separated from them. His fellow-townsmen at all times knew of his worldly prosperity, and were conscious of a desire on his part to stand well with them. Abraham Sturley, who was once bailiff, writing apparently to a brother early in 1598, says: "This is one special remembrance from our father's motion. It seemeth by him that our countryman, Mr. Shakspeare, is willing to disburse some money upon some odd yardland or other at Shottery, or near about us: he thinketh it a very fit pattern to move him to deal in the matter of our tithes. By the instructions you can give him thereof, and



by the friends he can make therefore, we think it a fair mark for him to shoot at, and would do us much good." To Richard Quiney, the father of Thomas Quiney, afterwards Shakespeare's son-in-law, who was staying in 1598 at the Bell, in Carter Lane, London, and endeavouring to relieve the town of the payment of a subsidy, Abraham Sturley also wrote, on November 4th, 1598, that since the town was wholly unable, in consequence of the terrible dearth of corn ("beyond all other countries that I can hear of dear and over dear"), to pay the national taxes, he hoped "that our countryman Mr. Wm. Shak. would procure us money, which I will like of, as I shall hear when, and where, and how." Richard Quiney was himself harassed by debt, and had just before (October 25th) addressed a like request to Shakespeare in his own behalf. "Loving countryman," the application ran—and the manuscript, which is still extant, is the only surviving paper known to have been pressed by Shakespeare's own hands—"Loving countryman, I am bold of you as of a friend, craving your help with xxx*li*. . . . You shall friend me much in helping me out of all the debts I owe in London, I thank God, and much quiet my mind, which would not be indebted. . . ."

Shakespeare apparently maintained very good relations with his father, and the coat-of-arms



APPROACH TO SHOTTERY, FROM STRATFORD.

granted to John Shakespeare in 1596 was undoubtedly the result of his son's exertions. John's own fortunes had long continued to decline. In 1587 an importunate creditor, Nicholas Lane, had made an attempt to distrain on his goods, but found none on which he could lay hands; and he had already (1578) mortgaged his estate of Ashbies at Wilmecote for forty pounds to Edmund Lambert, a family friend, and sold some of his property (1579) at Snitterfield to Robert Webbe, yeoman, for four pounds. A vexatious law-suit arose out of the mortgage of Ashbies. John Shakespeare, although hard pressed by other debts, according to the agreement, offered in 1580 to pay off the mortgage, but Lambert refused to relinquish the property; and on his death, in 1597, his son continued in possession, and John Shakespeare endeavoured to deprive him, with what success is not known. In 1592, John Shakespeare was in worse plight: he feared to go to church lest creditors should arrest him, and was returned as a "recusant." But throughout this troubled time he still lived in the old house in Henley Street; and although he is said to have let out an adjoining tenement, he never parted with the copyhold of the property. In 1601 he died intestate, and William doubtless followed him to the grave. The poet, as the eldest son, inherited the houses in Henley Street, but his mother continued to live there till her death, in September, 1608.

Five years before his father's death, another and a far sadder funeral had brought



Shakespeare to Stratford. On August 11th, 1596, there was buried in the parish church his only son, Hamnet, aged eleven. That loss must have tempered the satisfaction with which the creator of Arthur and Mamillius witnessed the triumphant success that attended the contemporary production of his "Romeo and Juliet." It was in the next year (1597) that he made his first purchase of landed property at Stratford, and bought the great house of New Place, with two barns and two gardens. For it he paid sixty pounds to William Underhill, gentleman, who had succeeded Alderman Bott, in 1567, in its ownership. In May, 1602, the poet purchased one hundred and seven acres of land to the north-east of the town, from the Combes, his wealthy neighbours; and on 28th September following he bought a cottage of one Walter Getley, adjoining his garden in Chapel Lane. In July, 1605, he added largely to these properties by buying for £440, "the unexpired term of a moiety of the interest in a lease granted in 1554 for ninety-two years of the tithes of Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe, subject to certain annual payments." This was the last of the poet's Stratford purchases of real estate, all of which were completed before he was forty-two years old. There is further evidence that he occasionally traded in agricultural produce, as his father had done before him. In 1598, few of his neighbours owned more grain than he. Between March and May, 1604, he sold one pound nineteen shillings and tenpence worth of malt to one Philip Rogers, and lent him two shillings afterwards: six shillings of the debt were repaid, but Shakespeare had to bring an action in the local court to recover the balance. The records of 1608 and 1609 show Shakespeare engaged in recovering another debt of six pounds from John Addenbroke. Shakespeare gained a verdict, but Addenbroke decamped, and made the success a barren one. But Shakespeare was one of the richest men in the town at the time, and could well have afforded the loss.

During these years, Shakespeare was frequently passing to and from London, and while at Stratford he does not always seem to have resided at New Place. He rebuilt it, apparently of stone, in 1598, soon after purchasing it, and planted an orchard in the garden, of which the mulberry tree—a new feature introduced about 1609—was long a famous survival. Early in the seventeenth century, the town-clerk, Thomas Green, who claimed to be Shakespeare's cousin, lived in the house, but he removed about 1609. It has been suggested that between 1598 and 1607 Shakespeare and his family lived with his mother in the houses in Henley Street, which his father's death in 1601 had placed in his hands. In 1607, his elder daughter, Susannah, married John Hall, a rising physician of puritan tendencies, recently settled in Stratford, who purchased a large house in Old Town. And it was there, according to some conjectures, that Shakespeare took up a temporary residence between 1607 and 1609. After the latter date, New Place was his permanent home, and he rarely left Stratford in subsequent years. He had many friends there. Old John Combe, of whose suspected usury he laughingly disapproved, was living at the college. He saw much of the Quineys, his father's and his own acquaintances from youth. The second house from New Place, a very substantial building which is still standing, was inhabited by Julius Shaw, son of a wooldriver, and himself dealing regularly in wool, corn and malt, and occasionally in wood and tiles. He was a member of the town council in 1603, a chamberlain in 1609, an alderman in 1613, and bailiff in 1616. Shakespeare knew him well, and called him in just before his death to witness his will. Relatives were also numerous in the neighbourhood. The birthplace in Henley Street Shakespeare appears to have let (after his final removal to New Place) to his sister Joan and her husband, William Hart, who is described as a hatter. (There they brought up their three sons, the poet's nephews, William, born in 1600, Thomas, born in 1605, and Michael, born in 1608; and the occupiers of the house in the early years of the present century claimed descent from the Harts.) Shakespeare's brothers, Gilbert, three years his junior, and Richard, ten years his junior, lived at Stratford, and the former assisted him to complete some of his purchases of land. Visitors to Stratford doubtless knew the wealthy inhabitant of New Place, and old Sir Thomas Lucy's heir, and Sir Fulk Greville, himself a poet and the good friend of Sir Philip Sidney in earlier days, doubtless met

him at the municipal banquets still given from time to time in their honour at the Swan or the Bear.

Shakespeare himself did not court municipal office: he was content to be merely Mr. Shakespeare, gentleman, of Stratford, and neither alderman nor bailiff. There is little reason to suspect that the cause of his neglect of this road to local fame is to be ascribed to any contempt on his part for its humble worth. It was due rather to the puritan atmosphere which was fast settling upon Stratford when he was in a position to avail himself of municipal honours. His father had evinced puritan leanings, with which his son was clearly never in sympathy. As early as 1564, when John Shakespeare was chamberlain, he paid two shillings "for defacing image in chapel." But it was some years before the puritan spirit laid a firm enough hold on the town council to induce them, as they did on two occasions in the early part of the seventeenth century, to consider "the inconvenience of plays." Shakespeare must have felt some amusement when the news was brought him from the



CLIFFORD CHURCH AND OLD HOUSES.

council chamber, opposite New Place, that after very serious consideration the council resolved, on 7th February, 1612, that plays were unlawful, and "the sufferance of them against the orders heretofore made, and against the example of other well-governed cities and boroughs"; and the company was therefore "content," the resolution ran, "and they conclude that the penalty of *xs.* imposed [on players] be *xli.* henceforth." Ten years later the King's players were bribed by the council to leave the city without playing. The drinking of sack and claret by the burgesses did not cease, however, but it, too, was now directed to advance soberer causes than of old. The council began to invite puritan preachers to preach in the town and to take their pottle of wine and quart of sack, at the municipal expense, after the sermon. One of these incongruous entertainments was, singularly enough, celebrated in 1614 at Shakespeare's own house. "One quart of sack and one quart of claret wine given to the preacher at New Place" is an item in the chamberlain's accounts for 1614. It was probably John Hall, the poet's son-in-law, who organized that gathering; or it may be that the preacher was an interesting character whose acquaintance the owner of New Place was anxious to make, and that the dramatist was large-hearted enough to estimate men's

foibles at their true worth, and to forgive those, under whose auspices the preacher had come to Stratford, for their vote of censure upon his profession. Shakespeare, it should also be remembered, must have been a regular attendant at the parish church, and may at times have enjoyed a sermon. The pew which the residents at New Place occupied, called from its early owners the Clopton Pew, was near the pulpit, on the south side of the nave.

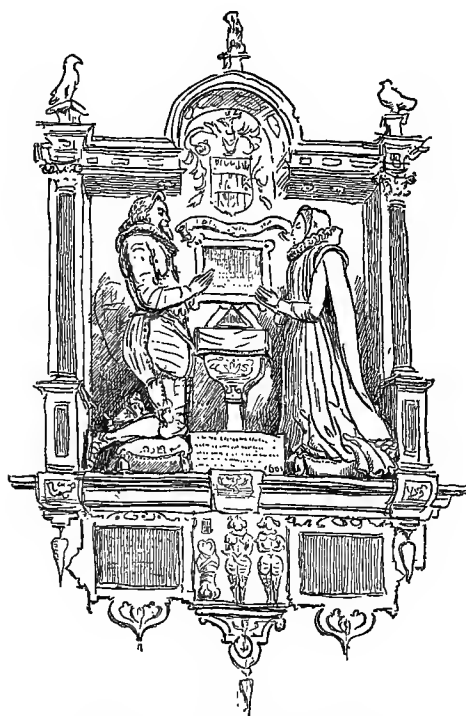
Few stirring episodes disturbed Stratford in the dramatist's last days. In 1598, there were riots, owing to the famine; in 1602, "rogues were taken at Clifford," amid much unexplained excitement, finally quelled by draughts of sack and Rhenish wine given to the townsmen at the municipal expense. In 1605 and 1606, much consternation was caused in the neighbourhood by the Gunpowder Plot. Most of the conspirators lived near Stratford. At Clopton House, then the property of Baron Carew, William Clopton's son-in-law,

lived Ambrose Rookwood, a leader of the gang, and he received there many of his associates. Catesby lived near Lapworth. When the plot was discovered, the bailiff of Stratford was ordered to make an inventory of Rookwood's goods. He and many burgesses proceeded to Clopton House on February 26th, 1606, and found much Papist paraphernalia, which they duly seized. Eight years later, on July 10th, 1614, old John Combe, of the college, died, and was buried in the parish church with much ceremony. He had told Shakespeare, according to a well-known story of little authenticity, some while before his death, that he believed the poet intended to write his epitaph, and begged him to tell him what he would say of him. Shakespeare replied with four lines, the sharpness of whose satire on Combe's ten-per-cent. loans is said to have brought the friendship of the two to an end:—

"Ten in the hundred lies here engraved,  
'Tis a hundred to ten his soul is not saved.  
If any man ask, Who lies in this tomb?  
Oh! oh! quoth the devil, 'tis my John-a-Combe."

As a matter of fact, Combe's tomb bore an inscription recording his many charitable bequests to the poor of

Stratford, and by his will he left five pounds to "Mr. William Shackspere." Other bequests prove Combe to have lived on intimate terms with all the neighbouring gentry, including Sir Henry Rainford, whose elaborate monument stands still in Clifford Church. In the autumn of the same year, the burgesses waxed warm over a local dispute. William Combe, John Combe's heir, who held much land by Welcombe, part of which Shakespeare had bought in 1602, resolved to enclose some adjoining fields, claimed to be the common property of the town. Landowners were trying to enclose common lands in many parts of England, but the Stratford people rose in arms against this attempt. Shakespeare's influence was sought in behalf of the popular party, represented by the town council, but he, much to their chagrin, supported William Combe, and his son-in-law, Hall, followed his example. The quarrel was carried to London, and after much litigation was settled in favour of the town.

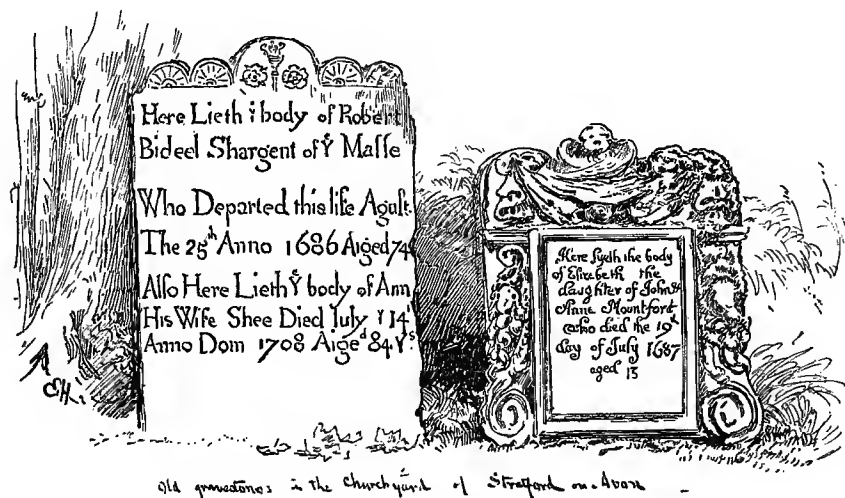


MEMORIAL OF SIR HENRY RAINFORD  
IN CLIFFORD CHURCH.

## XXIV.

*SHAKESPEARE'S DEATH AND HIS DESCENDANTS.*

**B**UT before this dispute had reached its final settlement, Shakespeare's days came to a sudden close. He had welcomed the birth of his first grandchild, Elizabeth Hall, in 1608, the year of his mother's death. On 10th February, 1616, there took place the marriage of his second daughter, Judith, who was then thirty-one years old, to the son of Richard Quiney, of High Street, Thomas Quiney, who was four years her junior. The ceremony was performed without a licence, and some doubt as to its legality followed. On 17th April, the



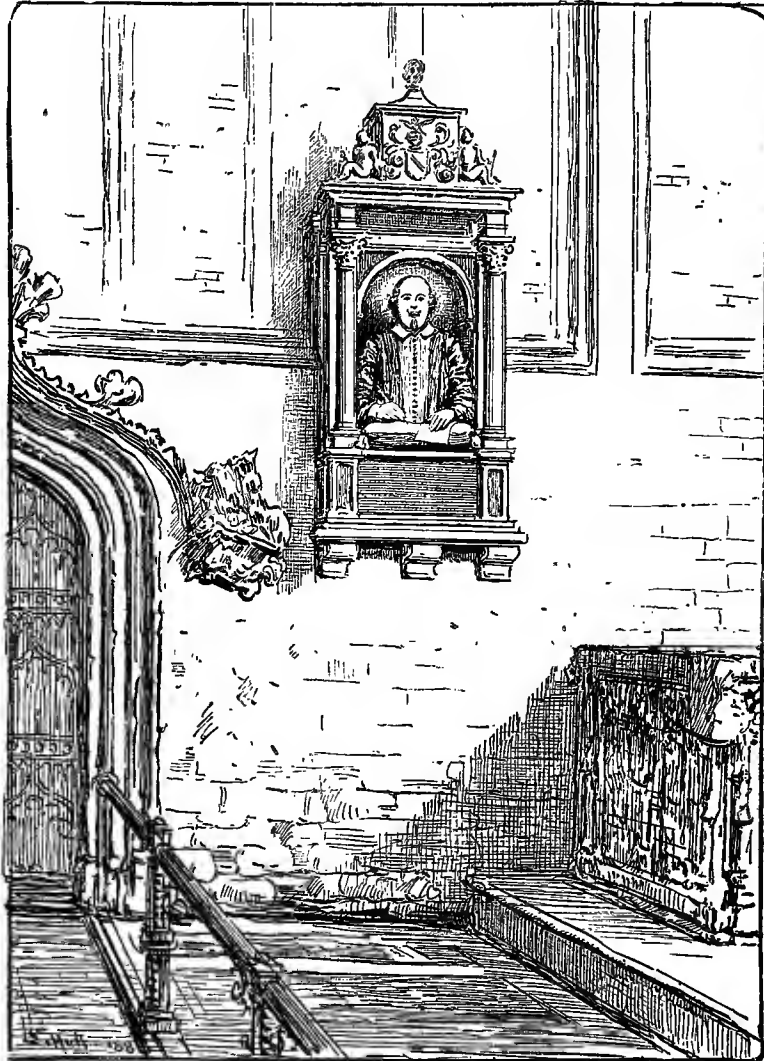
Old gravestones in the churchyard of Stratford-on-Avon.

funeral of his brother-in-law, William Hart, the latter, brought almost all the members of the family to the parish church. But it is doubtful if Shakespeare was present. A few days before, according to an ancient tradition, the poet was entertaining at New Place his two friends, Michael Drayton and Ben Jonson, and in the midst of the festivities was himself taken suddenly ill. Certain it is that, six days after Hart's burial, Shakespeare died, at the age of fifty-two. On 25th April he was buried near the northern wall of the chancel, by the door of the charnel-house, where the bones dug up from the churchyard were deposited. The poet, fearful that his bones should suffer this indignity, is said to have written for inscription on his tomb :—

“Good frend, for Jesus sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed heare ;  
Bleste be the man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.”

According to the letter of one William Hall, a visitor to Stratford in 1694, recently brought to light, these verses were penned to suit “the capacity of clerks and sextons, for the most part a very ignorant set of people” ; had this curse not threatened them, Hall proceeds, they would not have hesitated in course of time to remove Shakespeare's dust to “the bonehouse,” where waggon-loads of bones were allowed to accumulate. The design, says the same authority, did not miss of its effect, for the grave was made seventeen feet deep, and was never opened, even to receive his wife, who desired to be buried with her husband.

Thus Stratford was deprived of the inhabitant whose "wit" has given it its renown. The burgesses of 1616 gave no sign that they were conscious that death was taking from them one who left aught besides a substantial worldly fortune to invite their respect. The great bell of the church was tolled, the bailiff and aldermen joined the funeral procession, rosemary was freely strewn above the grave, and a liberal banquet was provided for the mourners. Every honour was paid by the poet's fellow-townsmen to his mundane prosperity, but none of those who were his daily companions at Stratford guessed that he had already been granted an immortal fame



SHAKESPEARE'S MONUMENT.

which would render their homage to his mere worldly store one of the most ludicrous episodes in human history.

Shakespeare's will, the first draft of which was drawn up in the January before his death, and the final draft by his bedside, was proved by Hall, in London, on the 22nd of June. To his younger daughter, Judith, besides a portion of his landed property, he left £150, of which £100 was her marriage portion, and another £150 to be paid to her if alive three years after the date of the will. To his sister, Joan Hart, who had just become a widow, he left, besides a contingent reversionary interest in Judith's legacy, his wearing apparel, £20 in money, a life interest in the Henley Street property, and £5 to each of her three sons. To his granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall, he bequeathed his plate, with the exception of his broad silver

and gilt bowl, which was reserved for Judith Quiney. To the poor of Stratford he gave £10; to Mr. Thomas Combe his sword; and to a number of Stratford friends, and to his "fellows," John Hemyngs, Richard Burbage, and Henry Cundell, xxvjs. viij*d*. each, with which to buy memorial rings. To Susannah Hall, his elder daughter, he left, with remainder to her issue, New Place, almost all his land, barns, and gardens, and a house at Blackfriars, London. To his wife he gave only his second best bed with its furniture; all the rest of his household stuff passed to John Hall and his wife Susannah. The executors were named Thomas Russell and Francis Collins. That the second best bed should have been bestowed on his wife was, according to contemporary notions, a mark of esteem, but that it should form the only bequest forms a strong argument in favour of the theory that the dramatist was not happy in his domestic life. His daughter Susanah was, according to his will, to take his wife's position as mistress of New Place.

Soon after his death, certainly before 1623, an elaborate monument was erected to Shakespeare's memory in the chancel of the parish church. The services of a London sculptor and tomb-maker, Gerard Johnson, son of a native of Amsterdam, with a shop near St. Saviour's Church, Southwark, not far from the Globe Theatre, were called into requisition, and the inscription was probably written by a London friend of the dramatist. The bust above the inscribed tablet is probably from a cast taken after death, and, though little pleasing, is the most authentic memorial of the poet's features. The words run:—

*"Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,  
Terra tegit, populus maeret, Olympus habet.*

Stay, passenger, why goest thou by so fast?  
Read, if thou canst, whom envious death hath plast  
Within this monument; Shakspeare, with whome  
Quick nature dide; whose name doth deck ys tombe  
Far more then cost; sith all yt he hath writt  
Leaves living art but page to serve his witt.

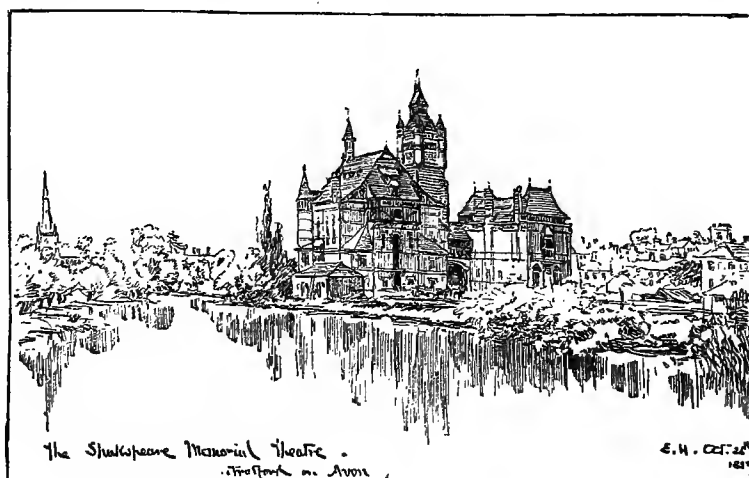
*"Obiit ano. doi. 1616. Aetatis 53. Die 23 Ap."*

Of Shakespeare's family, his wife died on August 6th, 1623, and was buried near her husband two days later. The Halls moved to New Place soon after the poet's death. John Hall increased his medical practice largely there, and his patients included the neighbouring gentry within a circuit of thirty miles. His puritanism grew more confirmed and precise in later life, and he frequently quarrelled with his neighbours. He was buried in the chancel of the parish church on the 25th November, 1635. His only child had been since 1626 the wife of Thomas Nash, and to his son-in-law Hall bequeathed by will "his study of books." This study, it has been reasonably conjectured, must have formed the library of his father-in-law. The books do not appear to have been quickly removed from New Place, as his widow, who was still residing there, showed them in 1642 to James Cooke, a doctor professionally engaged at Stratford in the Civil War. He informed her that some manuscripts of her husband were among them, and offered to buy them of her, but this offer she declined, and disputed his opinion as to the authorship of the papers. Is it possible that some of her father's manuscripts were among them, or that she believed them to be? In any case, the information would have availed her little, for reading was not one of her accomplishments. Unhappily, nothing is known of the later history of the papers. Mistress Hall died on July 11th, 1649, and was buried near her husband. Her tomb bears the epitaph:—

Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,  
Wise to salvation was good Mistris Hall;  
Something of Shakespere was in that, but this  
Wholy of Him with whom she's now in blisse.

Then, Passenger, ha'st ne're a teare  
 To weepe with her that wept with all;—  
 That wept, yet set herselfe to chere  
 Them up with comforts cordiall?  
 Her love shall live, her mercy spread,  
 When thou ha'st ne're a teare to shed."

Judith, Shakespeare's younger daughter, lived on till February 9th, 1662. Her husband, soon after the marriage, removed to the house called the Cage, in Bridge Street, and was in business there as a vintner. He was a member of the town council from 1617 till 1630, when he fell into evil habits, and was fined for swearing and encouraging tipplers. From that date his fortunes declined. He finally sought employment in London, and died there about 1652. Judith's married life was thus not a very happy one. Of her three sons, the eldest, named Shakespeare, died in infancy, and the other two on reaching manhood, and she lived lonely at Stratford till death. The last surviving descendant of Shakespeare was Elizabeth Hall, whose first husband, Thomas Nash, a resident at Stratford, who had studied at Lincoln's Inn, died in 1647. She married afterwards Sir John Barnard, a Northampton gentleman, and died, without issue by either marriage, in 1670. With her husband she lived at New Place, which she



inherited from her mother, for some years after her second marriage, but she afterwards resided at Sir John's house at Abington, in Northamptonshire, in whose church she was buried. New Place was, however, still her property, and she bequeathed it to Sir John Barnard, soon after whose death, in 1674, it was repurchased by the Clopton family. Thus, with the death of his granddaughter Elizabeth, the last direct descendant of the poet disappeared.

It is unnecessary to pursue the history of Stratford beyond these points. Of the final fortunes of New Place, it only remains to tell of its rebuilding by a Hugh Clopton in 1703, before any authentic pictorial representation of its appearance in Shakespeare's day had been made, and of its ultimate demolition in 1759 by Francis Gastrell, Vicar of Stratford, to avoid the pertinacity of sightseers and the payment of local taxes. Of other structural changes that Stratford underwent in the last century, the chief were the destruction of the College and the erection of the Townhall in place of the ancient Guildhall. We will leave it to the general historian to treat of the part played by the town in the fierce civil warfare waged in the middle of the seventeenth century, of the story of Queen Henrietta Maria's flying visit to New Place in 1643, and of the quartering of soldiers at the time in Shakespeare's dwelling-place. The constitutional annalist will describe the grants of new charters to the town by Charles II., and the reform of the corporation in 1835. Of the jubilees celebrated in the

town since the days of Garrick to honour the memory of the poet, many records exist, and their barren history has been often told. The purchase by the nation of the birthplace in Henley Street, and of New Place with its gardens, and the erection of the memorial buildings on the river bank, are fresh in the memory of literary students, and are no unworthy, although in themselves necessarily inadequate, testimonies of a nation's gratitude to Stratford for having nurtured its king of poets.

The origin of the town and its development in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries alone afford a profitable study to the lover of Shakespeare. But even while studying them, it is useless to estimate exactly how much the dramatist owed to Stratford. We could point out in the various lists of the town's inhabitants the immortal names of Fluellen and Bardolf, of John Page and Thomas Ford, of Perkes and of Peto, and many more confirmations than appear in the foregoing pages of Aubrey's statement that "he did gather the humours of men daily wherever he came." We might depict Shakespeare seeking inspiration for the sylvan scenes of "As You Like It" beneath the trees of the Warwickshire Forest of Arden. We might press the theory that makes Lord Carew the lord of "Taming of the Shrew," and Clopton House the scene of Kit Sly's illusion. But it is wiser to take a larger view, and to be content to marvel how, in the aspect of the town and country, fair as the latter was and is, or how in the petty details of Stratford daily life, his mighty genius found adequate nourishment. Let us make no vain endeavour to solve this mystery, nor weakly strive to indicate either in "the world of living men," or in "the wood, and stream, and field, and hill, and ocean,"

*"All he had loved and moulded into thought."*







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